

# THE WEEK.

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## THE WEEK:

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AFTER years of trial the Scott Act and the principle of local prohibition, at least on a small scale, have been condemned, and we venture to say finally condemned by the people of Ontario. The result is just what might have been expected and what was expected by many sincere friends of temperance. It is pretty clear that it is physically impossible to prevent the introduction into a given district by those who wish it of a portable commodity whose manufacture and use are permitted in surrounding districts. It is also clear that any and every attempt to punish as a crime in one small section of the country that which is legal and respectable in neighbouring sections must of necessity fail. It is no less clear that the attempt to treat as a crime, by virtue of the vote of a bare popular majority in any community, that which a large and influential minority of the people regard as harmless, respectable and moral, must fail, whether that community be large or small. No legislative decree can make that a crime which is not criminal in itself, or which is not recognized as criminal by the moral sense of all honest and virtuous citizens. This being a first principle in the science of Government, it follows that the attempt to enforce such a decree by police methods must be productive of evil, and that continually. Such an attempt tends to confuse the moral sense of the community. It sets a snare for the consciences both of those who believe in the law and try to enforce it, and of those whose sense of justice it outrages. In proportion to the energy with which the attempt to enforce such a law is prosecuted will be the ingenuity developed in devising modes of evasion, and the ill-feeling and antagonism aroused between the honest fanaticism which strives to enforce it and the honest sense of injury which prompts either to evade or defy it. It is to be hoped that the friends of prohibition will study well the expensive lesson set before them, and will again revert to those unobjectionable and excellent methods of moral suasion which were plied with so much success before the

compulsory tactics were adopted. When the great majority of the people have been persuaded to become total abstainers on principle, then, perhaps, it may be in order to talk about sweeping measures of prohibition, though then, happily, the chief necessity for such measures will no longer exist.

A SERIES of resolutions was passed at a recent meeting of the Toronto Knights of Labour, condemning in strong terms the proposal to employ the convicts in the Central Prison in certain iron industries, and expressing the opinion that the whole question of prison management should be investigated on different lines from those hitherto followed. Touching the latter proposition some excellent suggestions are made. It is recommended that the new investigation should be carried on with a view to ascertain the causes that lead to the commission of crime. The Knights confidently assert that it is not only possible but "easily within our power to very materially reduce crime, and consequently reduce the number of prisoners," thus solving the prison problem from the other end. They further declare and every good citizen will endorse the declaration: "That it is the duty of the Government as far as possible to remove the causes of crime, and to provide for the better care of those persons who are disposed to commit crime, and for the greater safety of its citizens; and that this is the better and more economic method of government." Most thoughtful persons will agree that none of our Governments have as yet either made adequate investigation in the direction indicated, or devised and applied adequate measures for the prevention of crime in so far as its causes are ascertained or obvious. We have no doubt that a great work remains to be done for suppressing and supplanting the agencies that are constantly at work in the production of criminals. But none the less is it clear that at the very best the process will be a slow one, and that in the meantime the prisons will continue to be filled with criminals who have to be cared for and disciplined. Cannot the Knights of Labour see that the proper discipline of these prisoners, with a view to the eradication of bad habits and the formation of good ones, so that when set free the largest possible percentage may be saved from again lapsing into crime, is a work in the closest accordance with the principles they lay down? And what reforming agency is so potent or so indispensable as a training in some useful and honourable industry?

CAN it possibly be for the best interests of the people of Canada that the International Railway should be run at an annual loss of at least \$400,000? The Opposition argue with a good deal of plausibility that but for the objectionable practice of charging to capital many heavy items which should properly be charged to current expenses, the annual deficit would be little short of a million. But, even the smaller figures are sufficiently startling and demand more attention than they have yet received. It is useless now to say anything about the vexed question whether a great mistake was made in the location of the line. The Dominion having the road, and being bound to operate it, the practical question takes this shape. First, is it possible by any change of plan or management, to put the road on a paying basis, or at least to reduce materially the amount of loss at present incurred, and second, if so would the change necessarily involve such injury to business interests in the Maritime Provinces, for whose behoof the road was built and is operated, as would more than counterbalance the saving effected for the Dominion Exchequer? It is, of course, conceivable that the impulse given to general trade and industry by the facilities afforded by the road as now operated justify the heavy outlay, on the same principle on which the subsidies to steamship lines are justified. But if so, satisfactory proof that such is the case should be forthcoming, and nothing short of satisfactory proof should be accepted as justification for so large an expenditure of public money.

FOUR hundred thousand dollars is a large sum for a young and not very wealthy people to sink every year in a single enterprise. So far as appears, a large part of this deficit is brought about by carrying coal from the Nova Scotia mines to western points at less than the

actual cost of hauling. It seems incredible that this can be shown to pay in any proper sense. The only persons that can be benefited are the owners and employees of the mines, and the only advantage to them is represented by the difference between the present output, and that for which a market could be had were satisfactory rates charged on the Intercolonial. It is inconceivable that this difference can confer an advantage on those few citizens sufficient to offset the loss to the whole community, to say nothing of the difficulty of reconciling such a method of promoting the interests of the few with the broad principle—"the greatest good of the greatest number." We are bound to recognize the fact that the National Policy presses unduly hard at many points upon the Maritime Provinces, and that in common fairness, a portion of the burthen should be borne by other parts of the Dominion. But if the "moral obligation" of the Government to spend half a million annually for the benefit of the trade and industries of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick is admitted, it should surely not be difficult to secure much better results for the money. A similar remark may be made in regard to the sum annually expended as bounties to fishermen, which sum, it is tolerably clear, is now pretty much thrown away for commercial, though not, perhaps, for political purposes. The case is becoming so serious that it may be questioned whether it would not be worth while to appoint a commission of competent railway men to enquire into the whole question of the management and usefulness of the Intercolonial Railway.

A FORCEFUL commentary on the shortsightedness of our authorities in their treatment of criminals is afforded in the state of the Montreal gaol, as described by the Montreal Star, which has been investigating the matter. Setting out from the elementary principle that one of the first and chief ends to be sought in all prison discipline is the reformation or improvement of the convicts, and bearing in mind the equally elementary principle that fresh air, cleanliness, plenty of useful labour, and the absence of the temptations to evil which result from idleness and vicious associates, are indispensable conditions of successful reformatory discipline, what must be the state of affairs in a gaol which can be described in such sentences as the following: "The space afforded is utterly inadequate to the constant demands made upon it," "Without positive cruelty it is impossible in this building to prevent prisoners herding together in the corridors, thus forming classes in a huge training school of vice," "Most of the cells are so constructed that adequate ventilation is impossible," "In some of the cells the beds of half a dozen prisoners are touching each other," "Many of these sleeping apartments are five feet below the surface of the ground," "The principal employment the prisoners are engaged in is twirling their thumbs and telling each other stories?" It may be safely predicted that the crop of criminals will not fail so long as cities and provincial governments furnish such hotbeds for their propagation.

THE Copyright Bill introduced in the Commons a day or two since is likely to afford scope for considerable discussion. The Bill is drawn on the lines recommended by the Canadian publishers, on which we have before commented. From the point of view, not only of the upholders of the National Policy, but of most other Canadians who fully appreciate the peculiar difficulties of the situation, the main features of the Bill must commend themselves as both fair and useful. As a matter of detail it may appear that one month from the date of publication elsewhere is a somewhat short time to allow the holder of a British or foreign copyright to print and publish in Canada, in order to save his rights under the Bill. In the case of large works this would seem to necessitate the carrying on of the work here before its completion elsewhere, which might prove, in many cases, a hard condition. Perhaps, however, by reason of the greater expense and risk of publishing large works, the matter would regulate itself, and the chances of practical injustice be reduced to the minimum. The provision that if the person entitled to copyright fails to take advantage of this Act, the Minister of Agriculture may issue a license conveying to any person,