

TORONTO AND ABOUT.

I find my remarks concerning the Mercer Reformatory require explanation. The Central Prison is built to accommodate from 350 to 400 prisoners (male), ample accommodation being provided in the way of workshops, with abundance of light and air. The corridors and halls are both numerous and commodious; the building of course includes the Warden's residence, and servants' and keepers' apartments. The Female Reformatory is quite as extensive as the Central Prison, with a maximum accommodation for one hundred women. Some of the larger halls are exceedingly dark and close, and notably the workshops, where most of the time of the prisoners is to be spent. The cells are only seven feet by four feet six inches wide. The space wasted in immense halls and useless stairways is not slight. The enormous expense that necessarily will be attached to this establishment when in full working order, in the way of keepers, guards and servants, heating, clothing and feeding, and repairs, will, I repeat, show the folly of the Mowat administration in erecting such a monstrous edifice to accommodate so small a number; and the stupidity of the erection is about on a par with the wasteful extravagance of expending a large sum of money in erecting at the present time new Legislative Halls, which, however badly needed, the Province is ill able to afford.

In private religious circles the feelings of the laity are shocked over the announcement of Mr. Langmuir prohibiting females to teach in the Central Prison Sabbath School. It is not generally known even in Toronto that the Ontario Government permits ladies and gentlemen on Sabbath mornings to hold first a religious meeting for the Catholics from 8 to 9 o'clock, and for the Protestants a Sabbath school from 9 to 10.30. The Government is responsible for half the fare of the cabs conveying the teachers to the prison. Mr. Langmuir, the Inspector of Prisons, has discovered a disagreeable element mixed up with the teaching of the females,—a sort of free-and-easy manner with the good-looking men and the guards. He objects to the extreme youth of some of the female teachers; and as a matter of fact, after all has been said to the contrary, there can be no doubt about it, the Central Prison, filled as it is with the abandoned of all classes of society, is no place for hypocritical pink-and-white females. This is not a private affair. Although not generally made public, all denominations of religion are concerned,—Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Plymouth Brethren. The indignation and approbation expressed are pretty generally mixed up.

The Protestants of Toronto are unspeakably annoyed; they do not say a great deal—popular feeling is kept as quiet as possible—but the thoughts of the righteous are overpowering. For the first time in the eventful history of Toronto two women have accepted the profession of a nun. St. Michael's Cathedral was filled last Thursday week to overflowing, by the curious of both religions, to witness the interesting ceremony of two women "taking the veil." The incantation, the swinging of incense, genuflections, and mummery were something truly astounding. Archbishop Lynch, in his usual bombastic style, preached a very suggestive sermon. Protestants, especially Orangemen, are considerably excited. Fears for the safety of the Protestant faith are freely expressed; though how a few novices assuming the white veil, with a dual increase to the order of the "Precious Blood," can affect the Protestant religion must remain until further developments a matter of speculation.

It is a cause for special wonder that new court-houses are not erected in Toronto, especially after so many presentments from grand juries respecting the utter insufficiency of accommodation and the worthlessness of the present buildings. I was locked in the jury room for eight or nine hours last November; the weather was very cold, no fire; the room was only about 15 feet long by 10 wide. We managed, after great difficulty, to light a fire in the miserable apology for a stove, and presently the heat was so intense that all the windows had to be opened, of which there were three, letting in a piercing draught. From constantly opening and closing these ventilators I succeeded in catching such a serious cold that I was forced to remain at home for a week. The judges' rooms, witnesses' rooms, barristers' rooms, court rooms, jury rooms and halls are, without exception, simply disgusting;

dirty, ill-ventilated, meanly furnished, mildewed, unhealthy and in every way abominable in the extreme, there being no one redeeming feature about the building from parapet to basement. There is no one stone or brick that ought not to be razed to the ground.

To show the magnificent manner the city fathers have in conducting improvements in economy, it is but necessary to hire a horse and buggy and drive to the eastern limit of the city, where the Gerrard street bridge crosses the Don. The bridge, as an inhabitant remarked, is "splitting its sides laughing;" it is on its last legs; every day the neighbours look out for accidents; the planks are worn so thin that in some places a cart-wheel can almost pass through. Drivers of heavily-laden waggons timorously walk their teams over the tottering thing, "danger" being written upon every plank and post and rusty nail of the structure. Surely the city had warning enough the other evening when the timber bridge collapsed in Yorkville, not two miles from the present unsafe affair, and the fatality of the accident gave rise at the time to indignant murmurs from those in the habit of crossing the Gerrard street bridge. Is there any sort of excuse behind which civic bodies may screen themselves when they wilfully neglect their duty? They callously witness the need of a new bridge; they bear the complaints of the people; they read the reports of the evil time and again in the daily papers, and silently refuse to move in the matter. Very soon either the country or city will be called upon to pay heavy damages which, some person ignorant of the unsafe bridge, will have sustained through its destruction.

As I hinted in a previous paragraph, Mr. Fraser has stubbornly refused to grant the least concession to the reasonable request of the architects asking for an extension of time, &c., in the preparation of competitive plans for the new Parliament buildings. The refusal of Mr. Fraser to the trivial (yet important to the design) request of being permitted to colour in "Sepia" or Indian ink the perspective drawings shows a determined obstinacy, the like of which happily is very rarely met with. Is the request of sixty architects, from Montreal to Winnipeg, to have no weight at all? Mr. Fraser ungraciously appears to assert that the professional gentlemen who are likely to compete are to submit to his dictation in total; they are not entitled to the smallest share of consideration in the matter; and, if the truth were to be known, Mr. Fraser thinks he is acting very generously in allowing them the extreme privilege of competing at all. During the busiest time of the year they are compelled to design and execute drawings and specifications which, when work is at a standstill, should occupy at least four months. It is charitable to suppose the Hon. C. F. Fraser is more ignorant in these matters than is generally supposed.

My comments on the Artists' Society are received with indignation. I cannot help it! I reiterate the statement that the Ontario Society of Artists is not all it is cracked up to be. Mere mechanical commercial painting is not Fine Art. Pictures got up for sale have no place in a Fine Art gallery. All the eulogium and laudation in the world never made a Michael Angelo or a Rembrandt. The rooms of the Ontario Society of Artists are nothing but large sales rooms; and the very objectionable feature of the Lottery should be hissed down.

Now that Mr. Brown is dead the people begin to appreciate his worth, and the proposal to erect a statue to his memory at this time is most appropriate. The names of the gentlemen composing the committee are representatives of all shades of politics, and are from all parts of the Dominion. Mr. J. D. Edgar of Toronto, as the secretary of the committee, would be glad to get the names of gentlemen of Montreal, or elsewhere, who ought and are willing to join such a committee. The proposal, that the managing committee should appoint other smaller working committees in all the principal towns of the Dominion, is a good one, for by this means operations would be greatly facilitated. Mr. Mackenzie's suggestion to place a bronze statue in the proposed new Parliament buildings I think ought not to be entertained. If such a sum as \$30,000 be subscribed (this amount was suggested) it would be the height of folly to expend it upon a statue only to be seen by the few; on holidays and the Sabbath when the park is thronged the object of the memorial would be entirely frustrated. The suggestion to limit the subscription either to a minimum or a maximum amount is unwise. The poor man's ten cents should be gladly accepted, and the millionaire's thousand dollars ought by no means to be refused. One thing the people are decided upon, that a fitting memorial statue should be erected to the man who was the foremost man of his time in the Dominion.

Queen City.