

to deal with it as promptly as we would in another year, and under other conditions, but it is not helpful to us, when we are trying to introduce improvements, to have it stated in the press and elsewhere that to-day we are doing barbarous things. I heard it stated this afternoon, by an hon. member, that he had seen instruments of torture in the penitentiary, and I would be glad to know what these instruments of torture are, because I certainly have no desire to see them there. I want to point out how unfortunate it is that we should have statements go forward, without evidence to support them, as regards the condition of the penitentiaries to-day. I had occasion the other evening to read a statement from the warden of the Kingston penitentiary as to the conditions there to-day, and since he has been warden, and certainly that statement discloses no condition that would justify the description which was given by the hon. member for St. Lawrence (Mr. Bickerdike) to-night. I know that the representation made by the hon. gentleman was made in good faith, but fortunately it is without foundation as regards existing conditions in the penitentiary.

We have completed the arrangements with regard to the care of the insane, and this great improvement necessarily creates a new situation in Kingston penitentiary. There is another question very close to that and which to my mind comes next to it, and that is the question of the whole system of medical attendance. I am sure the hon. member will agree with me that this is a most important question. There is more in that question than the position of one man; there is the question whether a different system in securing medical attendance for the convicts is not desirable. Before we come to deal with one isolated case it would be wise for us to come to a conclusion on the subject, because what may happen in a particular case may be affected very gravely by what conclusion may be reached on the general question.

I would ask nothing better than to have the time and the opportunity to bring about improvements in the conditions in our penitentiaries, but I want to say perfectly frankly that I can hold out no hope to anybody who thinks that between now and to-morrow, or between now and next week, or between now and next month, we can have an ideal system of penitentiary administration. It is not possible to effect improvement in such great haste as some people would seem to think. We are at

[Mr. Doherty.]

the beginning of things in the way of improvement, and we will have to go step by step. I believe we will in time bring about improvement, and I hope to have the co-operation of those hon. gentlemen who desire it as earnestly as I do. I shall count upon the assistance of the hon. member for Frontenac (Mr. Edwards), just as I shall count upon the assistance of the hon. member for Kingston (Mr. Nickle), and even upon the assistance of the hon. member for St. Lawrence (Mr. Bickerdike), if he gets himself into a frame of mind where he can believe that my heart is not so full of the spirit of vengeance as he affected to think it was. I do not promise the hon. member that the penitentiaries shall become such pleasure resorts as the Colorado prison that he has described. With the time that has been at my disposal I have done my utmost to bring about improvement, and I hope to be able to bring about still greater improvement. It is only frank and honest on my part to say that I believe that those are mistaken who nurse the idea that you can carry on institutions which only have the right to exist because it is the duty of society to punish offenders, by leaving out the element of punishment. I do not pledge myself to any undertaking of that kind. Of more importance than the condition of a particular convict is the question why society has the right to punish a man, and my belief is that the real reason why we have the right to arrest and detain a man is in order that the punishment he receives may serve as a deterrent to others. Incidental to that punishment I would be glad to do everything I can to reform. Under no circumstances would I countenance anything that would not be humane. But when it is suggested that a penitentiary should cease to be a place where people are punished, that the conditions in it shall be made such as it shall cease to be a punitive institution, then I think the time will have arrived when the state would have no right to maintain such an institution. We have no right, in my judgment, to imprison a man exclusively for the sake of reforming him; our right rests on the necessity of punishing him to protect society, and when the necessity for punishment will have disappeared, the right to imprison will have disappeared also.

Mr. BICKERDIKE: Would the hon. gentleman not go a little further and say