

The Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island 100 Years Ago.—I.

OF the administration and enforcement of the Law in Prince Edward Island, up to the year 1801, there appears to be no official record. But there can be no doubt that offences against the statutes provided for the welfare and peace of the colony were punished with Draconian severity. There is evidence—both of tradition and, in some instances, written testimony—that the stocks and the pillory were often occupied and that a gibbet was, on frequent occasions the way of exit from this mortal and law-bound existence for criminals whose offences would nowadays seem to us pitifully trivial to deserve such punishment as death.

Compare the recent pardoning of a murderer, sentenced to death by the Chief Justice of our Supreme Court, with the punishments inflicted in those old days, and it will be confessed, that times have changed. Yes, indeed, those days were different. Criminals were not then feasted and presented with flowers and petitioned for as if they were popular heroes. For stealing a sheep men were in some cases hung; and in a former volume of this magazine a story was told, by Mr. L. W. Watson, which vividly described the severity with which minor offences against the law were punished at the time of which we write.

Some idea of the punishments thought adequate to fit the crime may be gained by reading the extracts from the old records to appear in future issues. Their publication in the P. E. ISLAND MAGAZINE has been made possible through the kindness of John A. Longworth, Esq., Prothonotary of