

The question then, How shall our gaols be rendered most effectual in repressing crime? may be presented in another shape. How shall we organize our gaols so as to increase (without resorting to cruel means) their deterrent influence? The deterrent influences commonly brought to bear in other countries upon prisoners in gaol (over and above the simple loss of liberty), are generally hard fare, hard labor, and solitary confinement or entire separation from their fellow prisoners during the period of their imprisonment.

When the Board of Inspectors of Asylums and Prisons was called into existence, a little more than four years ago, the common gaols throughout the province can hardly be said to have exercised any deterring influence whatever upon the criminal classes. Imprisonment in gaols then did not involve hard fare, hard labour, nor indeed any separation of the prisoners beyond the separation (in many gaols very imperfect) of the sexes. Instead of this the prisoners received, in the great majority of prisons, much better fare than they could have obtained outside the prison walls; of labour there was absolutely none or next to none, and classification or separation was not dreamt of, and was indeed in most prisons (from defective construction or inadequate accommodation) impossible. Everywhere the tried and the untried, the young and the old, the novice in crime and the practised and hardened offender, the modest and perhaps innocent girl and the most lost and degraded of the sex, were thrown together in one common apartment, where they had nothing to do the livelong day but recount old deeds of villainy and concoct schemes for the commission of new. In some of the gaols, indeed, they were allowed to relieve the monotony of their prison life with games of checkers, and with reading newspapers and novels. To the habitual frequenters of our gaols it is almost needless to say that this mode of life must have been most attractive, and to few or none would it have presented any very formidable aspect.

The Board have striven earnestly to remedy, as far as in their power, these very grave defects in the old *régime* of our prisons. They have laboured, and with very considerable success, to have all the old gaols so altered and improved as to conform to the salu-