

PRISON REFORM AND PRISON SUNDAY.

Sir,—In view of the fact that Sunday next the 20th inst., is Prison Sunday, and will probably be pretty generally observed as such by the clergy of this Province, we have thought the time opportune for calling attention to the Prison Reform Movement, inaugurated last spring by the Prisoners' Aid Association of Canada. The Association has memorialized the Ontario Government on the subject, and has asked for the appointment of a Commission of competent gentlemen to collect information regarding prisons, reformatories, houses of correction, workhouses, etc., with a view to the adoption of the most approved methods of dealing with the criminal classes. They are also suggesting to the Government the propriety of erecting sufficient prison and reformatory accommodation in the Province to completely relieve the goals of criminals convicted of crime and under sentence. When the goals are relieved of this class of prisoners there will then be room for classification and for the isolation of persons under custody and awaiting trial. The following resolutions have also been commended to the favorable consideration of the Government:

1. County goals should be maintained only as places of detention for persons charged with offences and awaiting trial, and should not be used for prisoners after trial and conviction.
2. County goals should be conducted strictly on the separate or cellular system.
3. Persons convicted of crime should not be detained in county goals, but should be dealt with according to the age and natural proclivities of the criminal.
4. A boy under fourteen years of age, not previously vicious, should be restored to his parents upon their giving a guarantee of his future good conduct. Failing this, he should be sent to an industrial school.
5. A boy under fourteen or sixteen years of age, having a natural tendency toward crime, or being convicted of a second offence, should be sent either to a Reformatory direct or to an Industrial School on trial, according to circumstances; and a special court should be organized to deal with these cases, as well as with females charged with light offences. A boy should never be brought to open police court nor sent to a county goal.
6. Industrial Schools and Reformatories should not be considered as places for punishment, but should be utilized wholly for the reformation of character. The young persons sent to these institutions should not be committed for any definite period, but they should be detained until reformation is attained, irrespective of the time required. The officers of these institutions should be carefully selected, preferably by a system of examination and promotion, and without reference to party or social influence.
7. As industrial employment is a necessary step toward reformation, and as this cannot be supplied by the county goals, the necessity arises for prisons and reformatories of ample dimensions, where such employment can be provided, and where other influences of a reformatory character may be utilized, and where a system of classification may be carried out.
8. The expense and maintenance of such persons in such institutions should be borne by the county from which they are sent, when such expense exceeds the proceeds of the industrial labor of the persons so sent.
9. Tramps and habitual drunkards should be sent to an institution where they can be provided with productive industrial employment, and where they can be brought under reformatory influences; and they should be detained in said institution under indeterminate sentences. Incorrigibles should be sentenced to penitentiary for life. They should be considered as having forfeited all right to regain their liberty unless reformation takes place.
10. In order to meet the requirements of the case, there should be sufficient prison accommodation in Ontario to relieve the county goals of all persons undergoing sentence. This accommodation should be provided either by enlarging the Central Prison or by erecting two additional prisons, one in the east and the other in the west. There should be unification in our prison system. The prisons should be graded, and the reformatory principle in its most improved form and after the best models should be incorporated with said system.
11. The question of prison labor should be removed from the arena of party politics, and members of labor organizations should look at this question from a patriotic rather than from a trades standpoint.

On examining the prison statistics for the Province of Ontario for the year ending September 30th, 1888, we were very much surprised to find that during that period there were actually 6,403 prisoners in our county goals who spent the entire term of their imprisonment without classification and without proper industrial employment. In other words, these 6,403 prisoners spent the entire term of their imprisonment in idleness, and the young and the comparatively innocent were crowded into the same corridors with hardened wretches who had grown old in wickedness. In addition to this we find that there were about 4,000 persons committed to goal who were either not convicted or were discharged for other reasons. Many of these were doubtless perfectly innocent and not members of the criminal class, but who, while awaiting trial, from lack of classification, were forced into association with the most degraded in the crowded corridors of the common goals.

We believe the time has arrived when this monstrous evil should be remedied, and we appeal to the Christian community to join us in this Prison Reform Movement. We believe the only remedy is a radical one, namely, the establishing of sufficient prison and reformatory accommodation to completely relieve the goals of all persons under sentence. This is well and tersely put by J. W. Langmuir, Esq., late Inspector