

Canada Temperance Advocate.

MONTREAL, FEBRUARY 16, 1852.

Statistics of Crime in the City of Montreal.

We have received from Thos. McGrath, Esq., Chief of Police, an interesting document, shewing the number of offenders apprehended by the Montreal City Police, and how they were disposed of, from the 1st of January to the 31st of December, 1851. We speak of this document as interesting, not because of the gratification it affords, but because that everything relating to the developments of human depravity is invested with interest to the Christian and philanthropist, inasmuch as such statistical information may afford opportunities of judging of the best means to be adopted for the suppression of vice; and if there be any form of vice peculiarly prominent, and leading to the commission of crime, against that master vice to direct special efforts. At the present juncture of moral enterprise, and in view of the tendency of public sentiment against the traffic in strong drink, we have examined the criminal statistics furnished by the Chief of Police with care; and not without a feeling of responsibility as to the inferences we have deduced, and the duties we are bound to suggest to the city authorities. We may, indeed, congratulate our fellow-citizens on a considerable decrease of crime. A decrease, we venture to affirm, not unconnected with the temperance enterprise; but there yet remains a fearful amount of external wickedness, the greater part of which might be suppressed without any cost to the city, and at a great saving of labour as compared with the present machinery of protection.

The total number of offenders, given in the paper before us, is 2553. Of course, it is desirable to ascertain, as nearly as possible, what amount of crime is traceable to intemperance as the cause. Mr McGrath says, "Of the above offences, 1290 have arisen from intemperance, viz., Males, 1040; Females, 234; Boys, 16." In looking over the tables, we find two columns thus headed—"Drunk in streets," "Drunk and disorderly conduct," and adding up the totals given in these columns, there are just 1290, that is more than one-half of the whole amount of criminals. But Mr McGrath must know, what everybody else knows, that those arrested for drunkenness, do not constitute the whole number of persons whose offences "have arisen from intemperance." There are 175 persons, including 10 boys, charged with "Breach of the Peace." There are 685 charged with "Vagrancy?" 20 arrested for "Indecent exposure," and 63 for "Impeding and incommoding." There remains 215 criminals, including 2 taken up on the ground of insanity. Of the 213, 2 are charged with "murder,"—1 for "cutting and maiming,"—2 for "highway robbery,"—3 for "housebreaking,"—2 for "rason,"—and 243 for "larceny" and "suspicion of larceny." The number charged with being "vagrants" is great, and some of them may not be addicted to drink, but may, nevertheless, have been brought to poverty by the intemperance of others. It is impossible to imagine that 175 persons have broken the peace during the past year, without the promptings of liquor, and who could be guilty of "Indecent exposure," unless maddened or infuriated with alcoholic liquor? We are not at all disposed to find fault with Mr McGrath's tabular statement. He has probably given all the information he was required to give—perhaps all that the records authorized; but we must insist upon it, that the statement is defective as to the number of offences which "have arisen from intemperance."

There are 1263 not directly charged with drunkenness; but it is in our opinion a very moderate calculation, which allows the inference that one-half of these have been made wretched violators of law, through the instigations of liquor. It then becomes a painful fact, that more than three-fourths of the crime committed in Montreal has arisen from the use of intoxicating drinks. We fear the same may be said in reference to other cities and towns in Canada, revealing the humiliating conclusion, that, by legislative permission and protection, our country is fostering the enemy of its own peace and prosperity.

There is one other fact given by Mr McGrath, which requires a word or two; it is, that 31 inquests have been attended by officers of the Police force. We cannot now tell whether this is the whole number of inquests that have been held during the year 1851. We suppose not; but we can have little doubt respecting the cause of the premature deaths of these 31 persons. Intemperance is the chief cause; and looking back, through only a few years, we are sure that hundreds might now have been useful, active citizens, but for drink—strong drink. Doubtless, there is a change for the better in the City of Montreal; and the same may be said for the country. But no thanks to the Legislature. Last Session cruelly *gavilled* the best temperance bill Lower Canada ever had, and imposed on this section of the country a base-born thing, horribly deformed, and having a soul deeply stained with bribery and corruption. We loathe that supplanter of a good law. We brand that CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED of the statutes of 1851, with the infamy it deserves; and we shall labour ardently, if not vehemently, until obtaining a law prohibiting "drinking houses and tipping shops," we can call on all our countrymen to sing to the glory of God, the one hundredth Psalm, as an expression of gratitude for the blotting out of that 100th chapter.

As to Montreal, with this statistical report of crime before us, we ask the city authorities to reflect on the chief cause of crime, and therefore the chief cause of the city's expenditure on account of crime. The Mayor of Portland says under the operation of the Maine Law the House of Correction is "NOW ENTIRELY EMPTY." What says the Mayor of Montreal?—not yet empty; and we venture to assure him and all concerned, that crime will abound while the incentives to crime are placed indiscriminately before the people. There are enough of grogshops legally established in Montreal to be the death of us all, and to a certainty must kill or ruin great numbers. Of what possible use are these "statistics of crime," unless they enable us to detect the causes and incite us to remove them? We ask the Corporation and Police authorities to unite with us, not merely in abating an evil, but in utterly rooting out and destroying every groggeries in the city.—We cannot do it as the law now reads—certainly not. Then what can we do? Hear what the Hon. Neal Dow says to a gentleman in Massachusetts; bearing in mind that he would say the same to the Mayor of Montreal, and that we now quote his words for the consideration of the whole country:—

My advice to you is that you should ask of your Legislature to enact a law, which will prove to be a radical measure; that you should resort to no temporising expedient, which will in the end prove a failure, and will leave you in a position worse than that in which it found you.

I think you should go to the Legislature, as we did, with a bill carefully prepared and arranged as a system, intended to be complete. Say to your Representatives and Senators, that the people now demand, respectfully but firmly, to be protected from the grog shops, which are spreading everywhere in the Commonwealth every species of misery, poverty, pauperism, crime, death; demoralizing the young—degrading and destroying the middle aged,