

six thousand male tramps wandering about in different parts of the United States. On the same basis we should have nearly four thousand in Canada. If we have but a hundred, nobody can deny that that number is one hundred too many. What is to be done? Is not something more stringent than the present Vagrancy acts required? This is a question which should be carefully considered by our legislators during the current session. The writer above quoted estimates the annual cost of this body of forty-six thousand able-bodied men at between eight and ten millions of dollars. The money cost of those who are annually fed by the industrious citizens of Canada is by no means the chief consideration, but it is nevertheless an important one. The fact that every man or woman who gives money or meals or clothing to one lazy vagrant contributes by so much to demoralize not only the man himself but others who may be encouraged by his success in gaining a living without honest labour to imitate his example, is a still more important matter, because in it is involved the encouragement of vicious character, and the lowering of the average of industry, integrity and honest manliness in the nation.

Can it be
Solved?

It is not always necessary that the one who calls attention to a serious evil should be prepared to suggest a remedy. That is the business of our legislators, who, under free institutions, may be assumed to represent fairly the experience and intelligence of the country. It is theirs to do something. It is vain to reiterate that if people would refuse to give food or clothing to such beggars the nuisance would speedily disappear. For various reasons it is useless to expect this to be done. In many an isolated farm-house the defenceless women dare not refuse. Many charitably disposed persons cannot conscientiously make refusal a rule. They have no means of knowing that the case in question may not be the one exception in a hundred, and they had rather give to ninety-nine of the unworthy, than refuse food to one hungry fellow-creature suffering through no fault of his own. The onus must evidently be thrown upon the State or the corporation, rather than upon the individual. The natural remedy is undoubtedly to be found in the general principle, "If any will not work, neither let him eat." Let it be the duty of the nearest magistrate to cause the arrest of every able-bodied man found begging from door to door. Let the vagrant be required to give an account of himself, and unless such account is satisfactory let him be set at some hard work for the benefit of the community, such as mending roads, draining swamps, bridging streams, etc. Let him not be jailed, to live in idleness at the expense of the community. Let not the prevalent but supremely selfish policy of simply ordering him to "move on" be permitted. Such a system would involve trouble, organization, expense; but so does every measure necessary for the protection of the people and the reform of the criminal. If a better method can be found let it by all means be adopted. But another season should not be permitted to pass without the adoption of some vigorous, practical measure for saving defenceless women and children from the brutality of unprincipled vagabonds.

The Hendershott
Verdict.

Many others besides poets have been accustomed from time immemorial to think of the quiet rural districts as the abodes of comparative innocence and peace. Those foul, dark crimes which from time to time thrill whole communities with horror have generally been associated in thought with the dark alleys and dens of vice in great cities, rather than the quiet and seclusion of rural scenes. Recent events in Canada go to change this conception of the relative innocence of the

country life. Some of the most cold-blooded crimes which have disgraced the annals of Canada in recent years have been planned and perpetrated in rural neighbourhoods, into which we should have fondly supposed the darker passions of humanity could hardly find entrance. Of such crimes that for which the two perpetrators are to suffer the extreme penalty of the law in a few months may fittingly be regarded as the climax. The cruelty and depravity displayed in the planning and commission of the deed are well-nigh incredible. The novelist who should have described such a plot and its consummation as taking place with the occupants of a farmhouse as perpetrators and victims, would have been sneered at as an inventor of the incredible. Notwithstanding the almost irresistible strength of the chain of circumstantial evidence which was wound so patiently and relentlessly, link by link, around the culprits, many, no doubt, experienced a feeling of relief when it was known that one of the convicted men had removed all possible question as to the justice of the verdict, by confession. While we fervently hope that the terrible fate which outraged justice has decreed against the human monsters may have a powerful deterrent effect all over the land, the event, taken in connection with others of recent occurrence, opens up a wide field for the researches of the sociologist, who may seek to trace the causes and conditions which have led and are leading to such horrors in certain secluded districts of Ontario? Are those causes to be found in heredity or in environment, or simply in the "cursed greed of gold" which is, probably, the leading vice of the day.

The Departmental
Stores.

The war which has been declared against the departmental stores in Canada is being waged even more vigorously in some of the great cities of the United States. It is scarcely necessary to add that the attack is as hopeless in the one country as in the other, so far as it looks to legislative action or forcible repression of any kind for success. Nor does there seem to be much more ground for hope in the boycott which is advocated by many of the papers representing special lines of trade. In some cases the retail grocers, butchers, dealers in China and glass-ware, liquor sellers, and others interested in the lines of business which are to be more especially threatened by the movement, are ready to unite in a boycott, but unless they can carry with them the very customers who are deserting them for the departmental establishments there seems little hope from this method of attack. But while many of the papers representing certain retail interests are thus vigorous and aggressive, it is to be noted that many, probably most, of the larger and more influential exponents of public opinion, recognize in the new movement simply an evolution of the same kind as those which have caused the labour-saving machinery to supersede the old hand-labour processes, which have removed the village factories to the cities, and which lead the up-town residents to pass by the shops in their own vicinity and patronize the large downtown establishments. Nothing is more hopeless in these days than to attempt to compel purchasers to pay more for household or other goods for the sake of helping small traders, who are being undersold by the departmental or other large establishments. If the latter can devise means whereby they may be enabled to compete in qualities and prices with the invaders of their territories, they may regain their lost custom; otherwise they must, we fear, bow to the inevitable. By the way, why may not a dozen of those who find themselves being hard pressed by the departmental stores unite their own forces in a great rival establishment, thus taking for themselves all the advantages of concentration and combination?