



THE old debate has been recently revived in Canada as to what extent the "cat" should be used in the punishment of crimes of unusual brutality. The criminals have done the "reviving." They have given us a deluge of these brutal crimes; and those of us who have no fancy to be "sand-bagged" on the way home from the office some night or to hear of a frail woman beaten into a pitiable condition of lacerated helplessness by a brute who happens to hold marital rights over her, have been discussing whether the free application of the "cat" would not discourage this sort of murderous assault. The "cat" is something that the most indurated brute can feel. He may rather enjoy a six months in jail. He gets better sleeping accommodation than he is accustomed to, and his food is surer and more wholesome. It rests him up for another campaign in dark alleys, punctuated by the rare sport of stamping the life out of some woman dependent on him—a wife or a mother. But he has a genuine fear of the "cat." He has a coward's dread of pain.

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THE House of Commons, however, under the advice of Mr. Aylesworth, has decided that the "cat" is a "relic of barbarism" and that it shall not be applied to the "thug." Just what the "thug" is, the Commons did not say. The man whom he cripples for life might imagine that he, too, is a "relic of barbarism"; and that barbaric punishments are about all he will understand. The wife-beater, however, is to get the "cat." The Commons is nothing if not chivalrous. If the judges will use this permission to sentence the bully who abuses his wife to the "triangle," they will protect many a delicate and suffering woman from untold cruelties. We may be very sure that for one wife who will come into court and complain of her husband, there are many who suffer in silence, dreading the shame of the exposure and knowing how little their tyrants care for a month in jail. But when they have it in their power to get the "cat" for their torturers, they will be far more apt to appeal to the law; and the fear of that appeal will have a far greater deterrent effect.

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IT is the curse of our people to be ridden by "fads." When they get hold of a new and promising idea, they bow down and worship it. It becomes for them the only idea in the universe, and they get up sects and 'ologies to puff it into a semi-religion. An illustration of this is the way in which we have gone sentimental-mad over the idea—a very good idea—that many men guilty of crimes can be reclaimed by fair and reasonable treatment. We have discovered that some people are criminals because they "never had a chance"; and that giving them a chance often leads them back to paths of obedience to law and peace with society. This is especially true of young criminals, and of occasional criminals who are driven to crime by want.

Some very excellent results have followed the surrounding of such persons with reformatory influences, based largely upon comparative freedom and kind teaching.

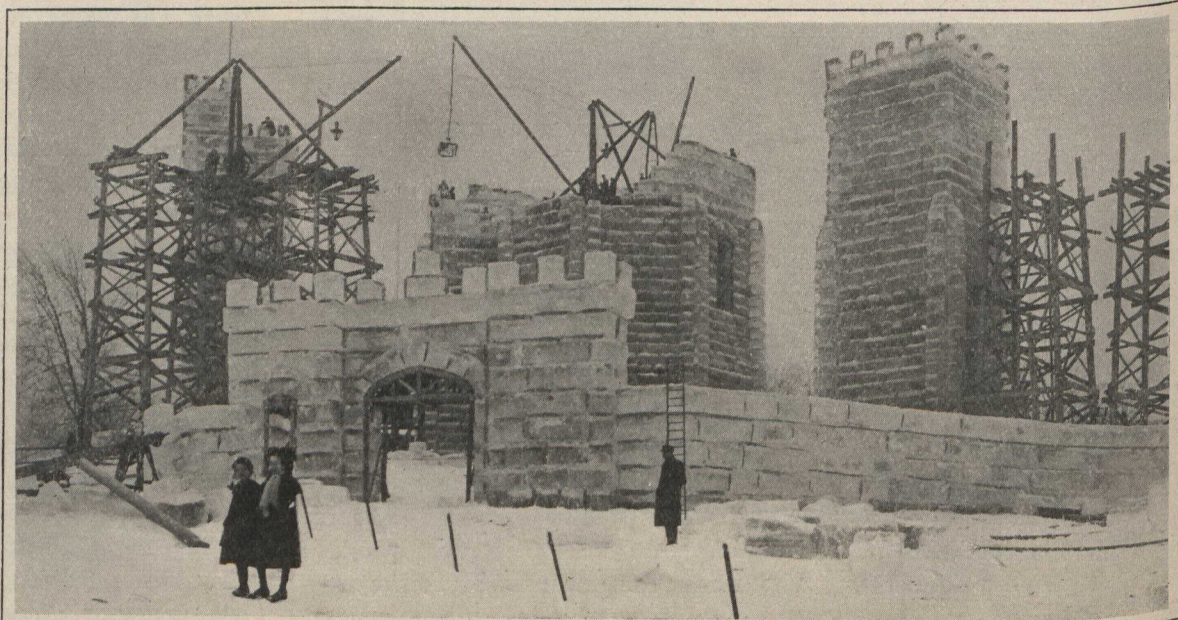
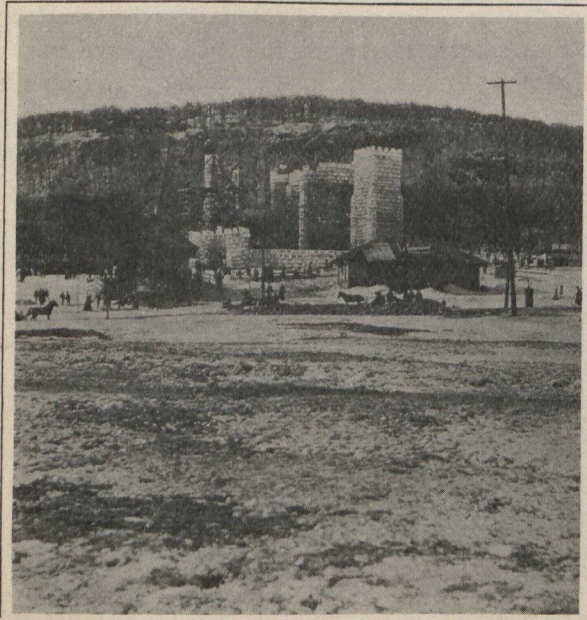
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THIS is a splendid idea but a mischievous obsession. There are men who are criminals from choice, who are beyond the reach of "reform," who regard kindness as weakness, and who are reckless to the verge of insanity. Such men need stern handling, and the sort of punishment which they can appreciate. They are neither children nor undeveloped adults. They are responsible members of society; and should no more escape the full consequences of their actions than the forger or the betrayer of a trust. Then there are many other men—more than our optimists would like to believe—who are wavering between the honest and the lawless life. They do not quite know whether it is best for them to toil hard for the pittance they earn, or to launch like some bold criminal whom they know into a desperate life of "pirating" at the expense of the toilers. They see that these latter, when they escape with their plunder, have periods of joyous and unrestrained luxury which they—the toilers—never, never can hope to taste. There are dangers, of course; but when has not "the bright face of danger" attracted the strong and the daring? The rewards are dazzling. We must not reckon without the spirit of the two poorly-clad working girls in a New York street car who said, during the Thaw trial, "My! Why, I'd give anything to a man who would give me a dinner at Sherry's."

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THE drudge is very often sorely tempted to sell out his or her birth-right for a mess of appetising pottage. This is as true of the wavering workingman or the toiling clerk as of the ill-fed sewing girl. And in deciding what punishment shall be inflicted upon the ruffian who idles all day with the best of food and plenty of whisky at his elbow, and then sneaks out at night to pound a man into insensibility and take his purse, we must always remember the others who are waiting to see how that sort of thing pays. If they see that he oftener than not escapes altogether; and that, when caught, all he gets is a period in a comfortable prison; in some cases at least their virtue and their prudence will not resist the lure. But if they see that he is sent to prison, and that, when there, he is strapped to a "triangle" in a humiliating position and lashed with the "cat" in the hands of a stalwart guard, they are far more apt to turn back to their lot, hard and unjust as it is. The "cat" will terrorise many a man to whom prison is a joke. Of course, it is our duty to make the lot of these tempted toilers easier. That is the real cure. I cannot put this too strongly. Do not imagine that, because I am asking that the sinister products of our vicious and unjust social system be restrained from acts of savagery, I do not realise that the perpetuation of this social system is the greatest crime of all. But it will certainly help neither these distorted products of social injustice, nor the cause of social reform, to permit them to maim and murder and rob. While we are bettering our social system, let us protect society by promising a punishment to all who use violence against a fellow creature.

Wilmporte



MONTREAL'S ICE PALACE, OPENED ON WEDNESDAY, AS IT APPEARED TWO DAYS BEFORE THE OPENING

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