

(January 14th, 1913.)

## The Progress of Prison Reform.

BY HON. W. J. HANNA.\*

AT a regular luncheon of the Canadian Club, held on the 14th January, 1913, Hon. W. J. Hanna said:

*Mr. President and Members of the Canadian Club,*—I appreciate very much your kind invitation to address you to-day. I'd have appreciated it even more if I had been able to avoid accepting it! (Laughter.) But your President was so persistent that refusal was practically impossible, at least without more courage than I can boast of.

You know, with an earnestness that almost compelled belief, he explained to me how this Club had of late developed a thirst for knowledge with regard to prison work (laughter), and were very anxious to know what the present outlook is. (Laughter.) With equal earnestness, and I think I may safely add, with most admirable assurance, he went on to explain to me that he thought twenty-five or thirty minutes' talk from me would work a complete and permanent cure, and would prevent any possible outbreak of the kind again. Now you can quite understand it was very difficult indeed not to accept so gracious an invitation.

So much has been said and written in the past three or four years with regard to prison work in general, and so far as we are concerned particularly with regard to what we are trying to do in this Province of Ontario, that it is very difficult to go far or to say much without appearing to repeat, or to overlap what has already been better said by others. But if this may have its disadvantages it has its advantages as well, because it enables us to assume that you know generally what has taken place in this Province at least. We are able to start out and leave out of our discussion—our talk—to-day much of what has happened. We can take it for granted, for instance, that prison labor in this Province, as well as other

\* Hon. William John Hanna, K.C., Provincial Secretary in the Whitney Government since 1906, sits for West Lambton in the Legislature. He was born in Middlesex county on October 13th, 1862. His is a vigorous personality. He is one of the most popular platform speakers of his day, a capable administrator, and heart and soul bound up in his pet hobby of prison reform which emphasizes the redemptive rather than the punitive side of penology.

Provinces and States and countries, has long been a difficult matter for governments to deal with; that you know we in 1907 appointed a committee of the Legislature to investigate and report, that by 1908 it reported, and that its report was, in line with what the President said, accepted by both sides of the House; that by early in 1910 we had purchased the farm at Guelph; that in April, 1910, we moved up our first lot of eighteen or twenty prisoners, and proceeded at once to farm work, without lock or gun or prison garb; that in the course of a few weeks we took up another lot of fifteen, and later another and another and another, until the fall of 1910 found us with—in the neighborhood of a hundred and eighty men, and the record of their conduct altogether better than we could have hoped for; that the winter of 1910-11 saw teaching for a couple of hours a night established in the institution;—I can scarcely pass this point without adding that no more interesting sight have I witnessed than those men taking in that work with zest like that of so many children of school age;—that the summer of 1911 saw the population increased to 250, and the summer of 1912 to 325.

Now all this most of you know. You ask, how have the men been employed? From the very outset there has been more work than men. There were the lands to clear, the fields to cultivate, ditches to open, tile drains to put down, roads to build, bridges to construct, fences to build, temporary premises to erect, quarries to open, and with all this the work of the first summer not even begun.

This was followed by the construction of our lime-kiln, the installation of our lime-hydrator, the building of our brick and tile plant, the opening of our sand and gravel pit, the construction of our tramway for the transferring of our bulk material, the putting in of our temporary sewerage system,—the effluent from which will be as harmless as modern science can make it,—the putting in of our waterworks, the taking of stone from the quarries for lime and for building purposes, and for crushing for concrete and crushing for roads, the rough-dressing of our building stone,—and all this followed by the construction of our permanent buildings, all this as far as possible with our own material and with the work of the prisoners themselves. And there is still more work than men.

And this says nothing of the field crops, the hoe crops, the vegetable garden, the dairy, the hogs and the hens. There is a lot of useful work in growing 6,000 bushels of potatoes, as we did this year, 8,000 bushels of grain, 300 tons of ensilage, with 20 acres of mangels and turnips for upwards of 100

cattle, and enough table vegetables to meet not only our own requirements, but with considerable to spare for other institutions as well.

Our dairy is essentially our own,—our own material dug and quarried on the premises, with brick and tile manufactured by the men, with some of the best work I know of in the way of floor and manger construction, supervised by a prisoner who took as much interest in it as if it were his own. The methods of handling milk are the best approved. This dairy with its 80 cows takes the work of seven or eight prisoners. It is useful and instructive work for them. They are the better for it, and we are told by those who have had wide experience that if there is a better dairy anywhere it is unknown to them.

There is a lot of useful work in bringing 800 acres of land from what was generally a very crude and neglected state up to concert pitch. We hope in time to do it, and that the prisoners will do the work and see how it is done.

So much by way of review. What are we doing to-day, and what is the present reading of the barometer?

Let us leave Guelph for a while. We can come back to it again. Not all our prisoners are at Guelph, nor at Central Prison, Toronto.

We have a large northern and northwestern section of this Province of Ontario, a section the importance of which we are but coming to appreciate. I refer particularly now in connection with this work to the territory west of the Soo and on to Manitoba. In and about Fort William and Port Arthur there is a big population. In and about that territory there is much doing. In and about that territory there has been for some time past an average prison population of somewhere in the neighborhood of 65 or 70, with gaol accommodation for somewhere in the neighborhood of thirty. Now you can quite understand they would all come there to Fort William and Port Arthur. They are not bad young men, you know. They have been engaged in railway building west and east of Superior Junction, or on the transportation lines east and west on the lines tributary to Port Arthur. They come from the boats, the lumber camps, and the railway construction camps. They find their way into Fort William and Port Arthur. These prisoners are generally good types physically. But many a man from the railway or the lumber camp or the boat has found himself on the streets of Port Arthur or Fort William under arrest for something he has done,—with some whisky behind it as a rule—in fact 90 or 95 per cent. of the

cases are the result of whisky. The men come from the streets of Port Arthur and Fort William to the gaol, and there is an average prison population of 65, with accommodation for some 28 or 30 prisoners. They go through and serve out their term of two, three, four, or even ten months or a year. What is the result? It is only the long term men we could afford to bring to the Central Prison at Toronto, some eight hundred miles, or to the farm at Guelph, as it would mean an enormous expenditure in railway fare in comparison with the length of sentence involved, so much so that it will be found that our transportation account for years past has run into thousands of dollars per year, of course a bailiff has to be sent to bring a man down. So it is only in the case of long sentences that the Province can afford to bring prisoners so far.

Now when we took up the question of going out to the land with prisoners and ascertaining how far we could go in that direction, I went to the then Minister of Crown Lands, Hon. Mr. Cochrane, and talked it over. That was four or five years ago. I said to him: "If there is any land you can withdraw from settlement somewhere in the neighborhood of Fort William or Port Arthur, which has any agricultural possibilities, withdraw it, as much as you can." He was fortunate enough to find within six miles of Fort William some 1,000 acres of land, as good for agriculture as is to be found here in the County of York or anywhere else in the Province of Ontario, unlocated and still in the Crown, and it was withdrawn from settlement and location. What was the result? Having behind us the experience at Guelph, we went at the problem. These men in the gaol at Port Arthur were all or nearly all physically fit, and up to the mark for a day's work if properly fed. So on the 6th of June last we started out into the 1,000 acres of forest with a tent equipment for a working camp, with four men in charge. We took up soon twenty or so more, only to be followed by twenty or so more, until we early had fifty prisoners as our average population in that camp, on those thousand acres.

They set to work, and you know what that section is like, and what the work of clearing is like. But they went at it with a will, and stuck to it, and in the course of five or six days they not only chopped but stumped and cleaned up some five or six acres, which was immediately planted in turnips and potatoes, with the result that at the end of the season we took off practically enough for our own supply, and this year we grew several hundred bushels of roots of splendid quality

for our own use. But we went on—and we went up there with just four paid men. I give you that experience because it serves pretty well to illustrate. Let me tell you: there was an Assistant Warden, the general boss if you please; there was a man who took charge of the outside work, of chopping, logging, and clearing; there was a man we called the guard, his business being to keep a general supervision; and there was a cook. You can understand what that one guard would have to do, with forty-five or fifty men, spread over two or three hundred acres of land,—for we have 400 acres there. We did not have lock, handcuff or gun, or, for that matter, a house in which to put these men. We proceeded to build what we call our permanent premises, but they are simply a working camp,—with water supply, such drainage as will take care of our sewage, a storehouse to keep the vegetables from the frost, and sleeping accommodation, as sanitary as we can make it, as nearly so as we can possibly ask for.

What about the men themselves? We started them working, some stumping, some chopping, and some making roads, and in the six or seven months that have elapsed since the 6th of June, within record time after we took over the land and made preliminary preparations, they have cleared in that thousand acres somewhere in the neighborhood of 300 acres, chopped and windrowed it, and a great deal of it they have stumped too, and some of it is growing vegetables to-day. We have cut out roads all around and through that thousand acres where roads were surveyed,—all that with what might be considered unprofitable, prison work,—roads 66 feet wide, 20 feet of that stumped and cleared, as level as this table in the centre of the road, and you know what that will do for the community. Reduced to dollars, we expect that next year we shall have all the vegetables necessary and cheap,—from an agricultural standpoint, a thousand acres of cleared land within six miles of the city of Fort William, land which un-cleared is worth about \$10 an acre, would be worth, if the estimates given me are correct, \$100 per acre in the market. What will that mean for the thousand acres? I confidently expect that in the course of the next twelve months, or eighteen months from the time we went up there, with very small cost to the Province, it will form an asset to the Province, from this unused labor, of sixty to seventy-five thousand dollars. What does that mean? We are doing not only something for the Province, but something for the men themselves,—a great deal, in fact. You ask, do the men run away? Occasionally. We have had some two hundred and some odd

go through our hands to date, and some three have got away, but let me ask you, is there any man in this audience or in this Province who, if this scheme is otherwise right, dares for one minute to condemn the scheme because one per cent. of the men fail to make good and live up to the trust reposed in them? (Applause.)

Let me give you some experiences. The men work, and give a percentage of efficiency, I am assured over and over again by those who have studied the subject, equal to any in the open market. There are fifty men there to-day, cutting roadways through the forest, cutting cordwood, chopping trees, stumping land, giving as much as we could buy from those same men at \$2 per day. I can well believe it, because I have seen them at work. These men go out of that institution; they have had good food, all the sunshine and fresh air there is, good beds to sleep on, and discipline throughout, for they are not permitted to go out and waste themselves and their means; they go out after two or three months looking and feeling fit to work; they are feeling fit, and they are anxious to go to work. Let me tell you some experiences we have had there with reference to that. It happens not infrequently at Fort William that a prisoner's time is out on Saturday morning; he will come to the manager, and say, "Sunday is a bad day to strike Port Arthur or Fort William looking for work; let me stay here till Monday." We never hesitate to let them do it. On the 23rd of December a man whose sentence expired that morning came and said, "If I work like the devil till the night of the 23rd, could I stay here till over Christmas? because I don't want to go to Port Arthur or Fort William on Christmas looking for work."

You will recall about a year or so ago now we obtained six hundred acres in the neighborhood of Whitby, with a view to transferring the Asylum there from Toronto. With the opening of spring there was much work to do. There was the farm work, which we did by hired labor. But there was a great deal to do in the way of construction, and we went to the Central Prison and selected some forty or fifty men, sent them down to Whitby, simply put them in farmhouses there, the dwellings vacated by the men from whom we purchased, and set them to work. We increased the number to fifty-five, then to sixty-five, and to-day there are seventy men there at Whitby. We put them to drainage construction, and the minute we got the plans for that institution we arranged not only for the drainage but for waterworks and sewerage.

There was grading to bring in the railway from the station at Whitby, a mile or so, in order to bring in and take out our material on the cars, so that instead of tearing horses, harness and wagons to pieces we will get our material on the car at the nearest possible point and carry it as far as we can. We started the men at putting in the waterworks and sewerage system, and at grading for the track; which has since been laid with rails by the Grand Trunk. They work every day, for ten hours a day, without complaint, and our average population is upwards of sixty-five. At Whitby there is not a gun, not a handcuff, not a lock on a gate, and while our average population has been sixty-five from early spring, the summer has come and gone, and this is winter to-day, not in a single instance has there been a violation of discipline. I want to say that that is very encouraging indeed.

What is the situation, then, to-day? We have fifty men in the open at Fort William, seventy men in the open at Whitby, three hundred and twenty men in the open at the institution at Guelph; that is, we have, all told, to-day, working in the open, working on three good meals a day, enjoying all the sunlight and fresh air there is, some four hundred and forty men, every one of whom, four or five years ago, would have been behind bars, serving out his prison sentence!

What is the future for those 320 men at Guelph? The future is work, work and more work, and lots more coming! What are we now doing? We have our carpenter shop, making windows, doors, door frames, trimmings, and everything that can be made for the Asylum which I hope we shall be able to begin building at Whitby in the early spring. We have our brick and tile yards, our concrete block construction, our lime kilns, our stone quarries, our stone crushers, all busy manufacturing and preparing material, a great deal of which will go into the Asylum at Whitby. That is the way we are utilizing the experience and labor at Guelph, so far as possible, in the proposed construction at Whitby. And so far as I can see there is work and lots of it in sight for years to come, productive work, work profitable to the men and profitable to the province.

Having said that much, just let me say with regard to another point or two, that our experience has been valuable, not so much from the standpoint of productive work from the standpoint of the Province; this is perhaps one of the least important phases of what has happened. It is now three or four years since we took up this work, and we have learned a great deal from the men themselves. We started with plans

for that institution drawn and prepared: those plans spelt "security," "security," all along the line. We had not gone far in our experience at Guelph till it dawned upon us that our greatest danger was in the security we were providing, that the danger in connection with this whole proposition lay in the security we were providing in the plans; and we have from that day to this altered from time to time those plans as far as the stage of construction would permit, and we shall continue to alter them, always in the direction of further liberty for the men. I don't pretend to say that we have solved the problem completely. Dr. Gilmour and I have talked over that problem and particularly over one aspect of it which is not yet solved: and that is, when we get through our construction—for we have altered again and again our plans in that direction,—shall we require prison walls around that institution at all? That question still remains unanswered. I don't know what the answer will be. I think a prison wall about that institution will be about the last thing to be constructed; the rest will be pretty well advanced before that. Let me say, we have not started out with any system or plan cut and dried. We do not claim too much. Sometimes I think that is the only conclusion people who do not know would come to, but anyone who could see and feel what is going on there would feel that the story to tell is not one of the outcome of any system devised or of any plans thought out; it is a matter of necessity, of development, and as far as I can see a matter of atmosphere created by the men themselves.

If I might mention names, there are two men to whom this is largely due: one of them sits here to-day, Dr. Gilmour; the other is Mr. Armstrong, my Deputy. (Applause.) These officials, and the officials under them, have created an atmosphere, that is calculated to inspire the confidence of the employees and of the men themselves, that tells to the men every day that what is just and right these officials will do. (Applause.)

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