

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

CRIMES AND THE PRESS.

It may be as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" to speak about the terrible increase of crime among the nations of the earth, and the causes that are responsible for this condition; still the voice is more and more distinctly heard and it is also commanding some attention.

A French journal recently gave some startling figures to prove how crime gradually lays hold of the young. From 1826 to 1880, while in France the number of crimes among adults had increased three-fold, the criminality of youth between sixteen and twenty quadrupled. In the period 1880-1893 the showing is still worse. Civil-criminals increased in number twenty-five per cent, adult criminals but eleven per cent. More than half the arrests in Paris are of offenders under twenty-one. These French figures are shown by Mr. W. Douglas Morrison to be typical for England and also for the United States.

Mr. Gerry, president of the society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, charges the public press with much of the responsibility for the increase of crime among the youth in New York City. On this subject he says in his annual address:

The first course of their training in vice is what may well be called vicious journalism. Lurid stories of crime, illustrated by vivid pictures representing criminals in daring and attractive attitudes; descriptions of criminals arrested for gross immoralities, with the like pictorial illustrations; narratives of these and especially of children charged with crime, where all the details are elaborated with the greatest care, with their pictures often of a salacious character, make a deep-seated and deep-rooted impression. Any one conversing with children held for crime may soon learn whence the suggestions of crime are derived. They are only too ready to talk on the subject and frequently to compare their exploits with those chronicled in these newspapers.

Mr. Gerry thinks that as for the effects of this kind of journalism the editors might just as well go out like so many Fagins and teach the children to pick pockets, fire houses and poison food.

M. Foulle, a French writer on the same subject, takes a similar view. He believes that the very recital of crime, its description in disgusting details, exerts upon badly-balanced minds a moral pressure which is practically irresistible. So clear is this relation of description of crime to the commission of crime, that congresses of criminologists and philanthropists and associations against immoral literature have again and again asked for laws making it a penal offense to publish a detailed account of crimes and executions, or even to publish the picture of a notorious criminal.

The influence of the press over the public mind is well illustrated in the reports from Carson City, Nevada, where at the present, according to the account, a veritable prize fight fever has seized the entire community, small boys, legislators, frequenters of saloons

and tenants of the prison. What effect will this have upon the small boy and his sister in years to come? What associations will they be drawn to? What direction will it give their minds, their hearts, which naturally have a tendency to evil from the early period of life? Such questions naturally arise, and parents and educators cannot but calculate the answer with feelings of sadness and misgivings.

It is customary to shift the responsibility for the dissemination of crime-breeding literature on the general public, but this can be admitted only in part. The history of the press proves that when sensations first were resorted to as part of journalism, their appearance was a shock to the public. The papers were regarded as outcasts not to be mentioned in polite society. They were, however, read all the same, just because every one was curious to see just to what depths of depravity an editor would dare to descend in public. Legal prosecutions assisted the sale of the papers, and the business was prosperous. Finally, what to commence with was regarded as literary flim asumed the status it now has of legitimate enterprise. It has come about by a gradual process of familiarizing the public with it.

In so far, then, as the responsibility rests with the public, to the public an appeal must be made for the remedy. Will the time ever come when true Christian men and women will refuse to support the papers that bring moral poison to the children? Will business men finally refuse to keep papers alive, that their moral sense condemns? If so, the press will quickly undertake the reforms all admit are the need of the hour.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES.

A correspondent of a Stockholm journal says two important archaeological discoveries have been made lately in Jerusalem. In the book of Nehemiah, chapter 3: 15 it is stated:

But the Gate of the Fountain repaired Shalon the son of Col-hoze, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David.

Part of these historical stairs that led from the city of David to the king's palace and the Temple have now, it is confidently believed, been found. Dr. Bliss, who conducts the excavations, has discovered thirty-four large, unusually wide steps leading to the pool of Siloah, where formerly interesting discoveries have been made. He is convinced that these steps are part of the stairs mentioned by Nehemiah. It is probably these stairs that are mentioned in the account of the visit of the queen of Sheba to King Solomon, I Kings, 10: 5:

And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the

house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went unto the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her.

The other discovery is the ruin of an ancient church. In the history of the Antonine, the martyr, written in the sixth century, the author mentions the descent to the pool of Siloah and a church situated there. This church, or rather what there is left of it, has also been found close by the stairs. It is remarkable because the water once was led by a canal under the altar and down into the pool, perhaps to be a reminder to the worshippers of the "pure river of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb."

GOSPEL OF DESPAIR.

The Chicago Times-Herald of Tuesday has an editorial on the "Gospel of Despair" which recites some points that deserve contemplation by persons who may hesitate between doubt and belief regarding the fundamental principles of Christianity and the existence of God. The article is called forth by a set of display headings in that paper, the general effect of the captions being laudatory of a Sunday speech by Robert G. Ingersoll, in which the latter retailed many of his absurd and untrue assertions concerning religion; and the Times-Herald expresses regret at the headings as an affront to the people who cherish the consolations of the Christian religion as indispensable requisites of a well-ordered life, and says that it has no excuse save the excuse that is often made for those who make a study of writing attractive newspaper captions to catch the public eye. And it adds that happily the voluble agnostic who abandoned an honorable profession to attack Christianity for pecuniary profit is no longer taken seriously by the people who represent the solid, progressive and intelligent elements of citizenship.

Our esteemed cotemporary then recalls that there are many people who have not yet passed the "jousting stage" that is sometimes regarded as a concomitant of true intellectual development, yet who think they find mental entertainment in Mr. Ingersoll's puerile attempts to pull down what centuries of the most profound scholarship have failed to destroy; and it adds:

There is a period in the intellectual experiences of many men where the ability to "doubt" everything is foolishly regarded as the highest evidence of great mental profundity. The young man at college has his little spell of agnosticism, when he thrashes over the dry straw of unbelief under the impression that the process is an infallible sign of excessive smartness. But the newer generations learn as they grow older and grapple with the problems of life that the men who really believe something and are anchored immovably to a fixed faith are the ones who have accomplished most for civilization and humanity. The reason Mr. Ingersoll's gospel of despair makes so little headway is because it is destructive, negative and pessimistic. Unbelief is a poor mental pabulum to feed human nature that is