

Feb 2nd
Night Session

CENTRAL PRISON.

Mr. WOOD then resumed his speech on the motion of Mr O'Sullivan. He said he supposed it would be generally admitted that there was no country in the world in which there was so little cause for crime as the Province of Ontario, where honest and industrious men, and especially unmarried men of that class were almost sure to obtain a livelihood. Still, a large proportion of those who filled the prisons of Canada and the neighbouring States were single men, and, though there was really no excuse for crime here, every country had to have its gaol and lockup, its constables and policemen, and all the paraphernalia of criminal justice, and the Province generally was put to an expense of not far from a million dollars annually for all purposes connected with the criminal class. (Hear, hear) A man who committed a crime was surrounded by all the protection of the law, his case was fairly stated to a jury, and he got the benefit of every doubt. A judge in sentencing him, when convicted, might tell him that if he had been in the habit of spending his nights in gambling halls or places of a worst character, he would now be sent to a place where regular hours were kept; that if he suffered from disease he would be constantly attended by physicians; that, if he had not been in the habit of attending the House of God, he would be sent to a place where he would be attended by clergymen; and he would not have to work longer than an ordinary workman, and would be fed as well as a British soldier. The judge might even go further, and assure the prisoner that a sensational newspaper would take up his case if anything went wrong, and a member of Parliament would be provided to move for a Committee to enquire into his case, and would be applauded by members of the Opposition, and when his term of service was ended he would have money given him to carry him home. That was really the state of the case, and yet the hon. gentlemen said the prisoners were treated worse than dogs. The Government of Mr. John Sandfield Macdonald, when they proposed to build the Central Prison, gave two unanswerable reasons. They stated that the Statute Book required that certain crimes should entail certain punishments, and that men sentenced to hard labour in the county gaols did not perform hard labour. They proposed to provide a place where the sentence of the judge would be carried out. They further proposed to make the labour of prisoners remunerative. The result was the establishment of the Central Prison, which was completed in the latter part of 1873 or the beginning of 1874. He spoke of that prison with a great deal of pride, because it was generally admitted that it was the best adapted for carrying out prison discipline, for affording comfort to the prisoners, and for the general management of the prison. There was no prison in the United States equal to it. In appointing officers great care had to be taken, and the Government selected for the Warden a gentleman who for many years had occupied the position of Chief of Police in the city of Toronto, who had obtained a high reputation in that capacity, and had also a high social position. Notwithstanding what might be said against him by the member for East Peterboro', discharged guards, and sensational papers, Capt. Pince was a good man, an honourable man, and a gentleman. (Hear, hear.) The chief and deputy chief guards were also important officers. Mr. Beaumont, from his appearance, his ability, his education and his apparent honesty, seemed to be a proper man for the position of chief guard, and as far as could be learned the man appointed deputy chief guard was well fitted for the position. Every precaution had been taken before adopting disciplinary rules. The Inspector and the Warden visited many prisons in the United States, the Chief Guard was sent to one of the largest prisons in Michigan, and the Deputy Chief Guard remained for two months in the prison at Albany, one of the most successful in the United States, under the direction of Col. Pilsbury, who gave him a testimonial in the highest terms. The regulations adopted were as far as possible those of that model institution at Albany. Since the investigation he (Mr. Wood) had taken great trouble to find out what was the practice in other prisons. He had visited those at Auburn, where there were 1,400 prisoners, and at Albany, where there were