

### Annotations.

#### SOME SOCIAL REFORMS IN PRISONS AND POOR LAW.

Sir Oliver Lodge, Principal of Birmingham University and in the foremost rank of our great men of science, rivetted the attention of an overflowing audience in Whitefield's Tabernacle, on Sunday afternoon, with an address on "Some Opportunities for Social Reform." The title in itself was sufficiently comprehensive, but it was as nothing compared with the subjects which the distinguished Principal reviewed in rapid survey. They began with our cosmic position as part of the universe, and ended with Poor Law reform and the regeneration of our gaols.

In the development of his theory of the doctrine of responsibility and the need of reform, Sir Oliver Lodge proceeded to argue in favour of the extension of local self-government by a system of Provincial Councils, which would relieve the present congestion in the Imperial Parliament. He also advocated with special emphasis reform in the administration of the Poor Law and the treatment of criminals. The joy of life, he remarked, was largely spoilt by the existence in our midst of grinding poverty and of crime. None of us, he thought, was satisfied with poor relief as it now exists. To kill a man's self-respect was a most extravagant thing to do, for self-respect was a valuable asset. Relief should be given before complete destitution, and not after it. This relief should be in the form of organisation. The unfittest who drifted into workhouses were usually people below the average in character and ability, who yielded too readily to the temptations of laziness, and lacked the power of organisation. Society must organise for them and enable their labour to be applied to profitable uses. They must not be herded in large cities but placed on the land, where they should become self-supporting citizens. The experiment was at least well worth trying. It was bound to be cheaper in the long run than the present extravagant system. As to the criminals, he urged most strenuously that our prisons should be modelled on the lines of disciplinary and reforming agencies and not merely regarded as means of punishment. Punishment did not make a bad citizen into a good one. On the contrary, it frequently had the effect of hardening the heart of the criminal and confirming him in his wickedness. In America the experiment was being tried. Men who had been sentenced to terms of penal

servitude were taught trades and encouraged in every way to become useful members of the community. Why should not something of the kind be attempted in this country? "Life," said Sir Oliver in conclusion, "is a mystery and a privilege. Many things are doubtful about the past, many things are, perhaps, doubtful about the future. One thing is certain—to-day we live together."

#### THE NATION'S PHYSIQUE.

Sir Lauder Brunton has been actively engaged lately in pressing home the necessity for building up the national physique during the period when children are attending the elementary schools.

At a recent meeting of the Incorporated Society of Medical Officers of Health, when the report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Degeneration was discussed he pointed out that the evils which the report acknowledged would have in great part to be remedied by the efforts of Medical Officers of Health and school teachers. Judicious physical training necessitated a preliminary medical examination, and exercises should be so adjusted as to strengthen weak points and bring about an all-round standard of strength. He thought a regular kitchen should be attached to every school. In reference to the housing problem, Sir Lauder advocated the addition of a Board of Health to the Government departments. The committee proposed the appointment of a Council to advise the Local Government Board, and in this respect the medical profession could do much to insure that the advisory council was constituted in the right way, and had proper power. The National League for Physical Education and Improvement, which it was proposed to found, had for its object the extension of the benefits of physical education throughout the country. Medical Officers of Health would be able, through such an organisation, to effect much-needed changes.

Sir John Gorst, M.P., said that many children went to the elementary schools totally unfit to receive instruction. He urged that the local authorities should take steps to ensure the health of the children. He found, in travelling about the country, that working men and their wives took a great interest in the matter. He advocated measures being taken by boards of guardians and town councils rather than waiting for the slow progress of legislation in the House of Commons. Miss A. M. Anderson,

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