

law now relating to the granting of pensions and similar allowances to asylum officers in England, as proposed to be amended by the Bill now before Parliament, should be applied.

SIR EDMUND DU CANE ON CRIMINAL TREATMENT.

In the May number of the *Nineteenth Century* Sir Edmund du Cane's article on the Prisons Bill and Progress in Criminal Treatment will be read with much interest. He shows that, under the proposals of the Bill, a complete change of fundamental principles will be possible at the will of the Secretary of State.

The Act of 1865 was designed to remedy pre-existing evils, and specially to provide for separate treatment. This is in all countries acknowledged to be the best system, and it was attained in England after much discussion and great expense. As crime has so markedly decreased, it may be inferred that some credit is due to the Prisons Acts.

Sir Edmund du Cane insists on the necessity for uniformity of regulations, and doubts if there will be found a more efficacious means of reform than punishment for misdeeds. He is strongly of opinion that reform requires time, and states that the average period of detention of boys in reformatories is necessarily some three years, while some of them turn out to be the most incorrigible convicts.

If, as many now think, the reformatory principle should have fair trial, it will be requisite to change the criminal law, so that longer sentences may be inflicted. Sir Edmund du Cane thinks that the worst cases would not really be detained longer than they are under the present system of short sentences. We are glad to note that he states that reformatory and industrial schools are probably chief among the causes of the decrease of crime, and that he advocates a special prison for young criminals, as the most mischievous years are from sixteen to twenty-two.

THE REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON DEFECTIVE AND EPILEPTIC CHILDREN.

The appointment of the Commission in December, 1896, the Report tells us, arose from the application, of the London School Board to the Education Department, for increased grants in aid of the special classes for defective children which had been formed on the recommendation of the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb, &c.

The Committee reports that it has visited all the special classes with the exception of Nottingham, also the Darenth Schools for Imbecile Children and the Epileptic Colony at Chalfont. Witnesses connected with these institutions have been examined, as well as medical men of special experience, in addition to Mr. Knollys, of the Local Government Board; Miss Cooper, Secretary to the Association for Promoting the Welfare of the Feeble-minded; Mr. Loch, Sir Douglas Galton, and others. Much written information from cognate sources has been also received and considered. The Committee, indeed, seems to have neglected no source of information, and the voluminous appendix to the Report, compiled from the evidence given and information received, is a mine of instruction for all interested in arriving at the best methods of treating these classes.

"Feeble-minded" the Committee interprets as "excluding idiots and imbeciles," and as denoting "only those children who cannot be properly taught in ordinary elementary schools by ordinary methods." The term is used throughout the Report, having been employed in the referendum to the Committee, who, however, recommend that in dealing with these children the term "feeble-minded" shall not be used, but that they shall be designated as "special classes."

The *recognition* of these children the Committee insists must be based on the