

4

chanics. It is proposed that the directors report to the next General Assembly, the result of the operations to which their attention is called.

The committee having observed that a very large portion of the convicts are negroes, and given much attention to that fact as connected with the best policy of the State, have also concluded to recommend the passage of the bill now on your table from the committee on Crimes and Punishments, providing for the sale out of the State, for a term of years, of such negroes as may be hereafter convicted of an offence, for which under existing laws, they would be sentenced to confinement in the Penitentiary,—such a course would gratify it is supposed, those who have memorialized the Legislature by diminishing largely the number of convicts, and of course the amount of labour.

As your committee felt bound to enquire into every thing connected with the establishment, as well to see whether the management of the institution required amendment, as to have a complete view of the whole subject in all its bearings, they gave much attention to its government and police, and for that purpose propounded written interrogatories to the directors and others, and requested that they should be answered under oath. Some of the directors cheerfully answered in that manner, and seem to have had great anxiety to give the committee all the information in their power. Much useful matter which, if time permitted would enable this house to correct many of the defects of the present system has been thus collected.

Some of the directors refuse to answer *under oath*, alleging that they ought not to be required to do so, as they would be thus called upon to criminate themselves. The committee do not see if they answered at all why they should refuse to do so under oath, because if a criminal prosecution were to grow out of the examination, their simple statement of it contained sufficient matter would be quite as fatal as if verified by affidavit. The committee saw nothing in the interrogatories propounded but such minuteness as was necessary to direct the attention of gentlemen to the particular facts of which they wished to be informed, nor are they aware of having asked any question not immediately connected with the official relations of the directors to the State.