

The near coincidence of these amounts, while they should prevent any other than necessary appropriations, indispensable for the public service, warns also against any immature reduction of the direct tax. After years of heavy impost, cheerfully borne, to respond to engagements, and uphold the plighted faith of the State, a wise economy in the Legislature, the gradual increase of wealth in the State, the development of her resources and the activity of her citizens, enabled the General Assembly of 1856 to reduce the direct tax one third. It is now but one tenth of one per cent; an impost that is hardly felt, and upon a basis of taxation which, (except in the city of Baltimore, where a new assessment has just been completed) confessedly does not represent the increased or new values of land, and of all other property.

In view, therefore, of the needs of various public institutions, the necessities of some of which, as of the Penitentiary for the suppression of crime, and of the Hospital for the protection of the Insane, are of the most pressing character; and which can no longer be postponed without discredit and dishonor I do not feel at liberty to recommend a reduction of so light a State tax as that which now weighs upon no interest unduly.

When I had the honor of addressing the General Assembly, on assuming the duties of my place, I called their attention to the provisions of our penal code, the insufficiency of the punishment awarded to some offences, the absolute impunity secured to many; its unjust, indiscriminating severity against others, its inadequacy, and the urgent necessity for reform in this matter. I respectfully renew those suggestions to you and earnestly call upon you to make such changes and reforms, as shall to you, the rightful judges, upon inquiry, seem expedient to be made in the Act of 1809, and its various supplements.

The report of the Commissioners to codify the Statutes of Maryland, now about to be laid before you, offers a suitable opportunity for, and invites the introduction of those changes, which are indispensable to make our laws comport with the requirements of this present day; with the progress society has made since its enactment; with the demands of humanity and mercy looking to the cure and prevention of crime, as well as of justice, in the punishment of the criminal.

I see no reason why there should not be shorter terms of service in the Penitentiary than two years or eighteen months, the minimum now allowed by law; at least as long as we have no House of Correction for the offences of lighter grade. And I fail to perceive the necessity or the propriety of that enactment which prevents, in all cases, the discharge of convicts between the months of October and April.

The design and intention of this was of course humane. It