

posing they come into injurious conflict with the weavers, (a supposition it must be remembered utterly at war with the facts,) and that be deemed a good reason for changing their employment, could they be engaged in any other branch of industry which would not equally conflict with some other interest? If for these reasons the Legislature prohibit weaving, would it not be equivalent to an entire abandonment of labor in that institution? It would throw the enormous expense of their subsistence on the public to be met by taxes on the citizens.

The petitioners allege that the convicts may be employed in making the same description of goods as are made by power loom, so as to defray the expenses of the institution. The experiment has been tried, and found impracticable. The testimony of Mr. Brown, the Directors, and the letters from many mercantile houses establish that point. Nor can the convicts be distributed through the several trades. The art of weaving is most easily learned; affords more extended employment for the old and decrepid. Spooling &c, necessary in a weaving establishment, gives employment to a large number who from age, disease, and other causes, are unable to do any thing else. When it is recollected that a large number of the convicts are sentenced for not more than two years, a time too short to acquire an intricate trade, it will be seen at once that weaving is the only branch of business that can be profitably conducted in that institution. In fact for these causes the Directors have been obliged to abandon all other kinds of employment, as appears from their statements and reports.

If the Penitentiary were this moment to discontinue the manufacture of the goods alluded to, it would not in the slightest degree benefit the weavers. It would not enable them to sell more goods, or at advanced prices. The amount produced by the Penitentiary is too small to produce any sensible effect on the market. It is but a pebble in the ocean. If its products were withdrawn we might perhaps miss them, because of their peculiar quality, but that withdrawal could not be felt on the value or demand of other goods. And if it should be felt, would it not immediately be supplied by fabrics of Eastern manufacture? It is in proof that it would. In either case the discontinuance would not benefit the petitioners. So far from the manufactures of the Penitentiary being an injury to the weavers, if they have any effect at all it is of a beneficial tendency. They tend to increase the supply and variety of the Baltimore market, and render it