

# ANSWER

OF THE

DIRECTORS OF THE PENITENTIARY,

TO THE

INQUIRY OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATURE.

AS TO THE

*Effect of Penitentiary Labor upon the Mechanics of Baltimore.*

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In regard to the general subject of the complaints against the labor of the Penitentiary, we beg leave to offer some remarks, which appear to us to be invited by the inquiry contained in the 61st interrogatory of the Committee.

The late excitement against Penitentiary labor was raised chiefly, it is understood, by the weavers of this city, whose number we are assured does not exceed one hundred and fifty. They allege that the labor of the Penitentiary comes into an injurious competition with theirs, and therefore ought to be prohibited by Act of Assembly. They require a change in the settled policy of the State, sustained through all changes of party, adopted as a means of punishment and reformation of the criminal, and to render his service useful in the defrayment of the expenses of his maintenance, which must otherwise fall upon the people throughout the State. They complain of a partial evil, and require it to be removed at the sacrifice of the public good.

We consider all such complaints of partial evil, and the remedy required, as unreasonable, even if the evil did exist. But such, in our opinion, is not the fact, we believe the complaint to be unfounded. Let us inquire how the 110 or 120 looms in operation at the Penitentiary come into an injurious competition with the weavers of Baltimore? They allege that it is occasioned by the *cheap labor* of