

It is here the sanguinary infliction of punishment upon those who have violated the laws of their country, has yielded to the humane substitutes, seclusion and labour. In the Penitentiary of Maryland, imprisonment and labour have been resorted to, as the punishment for crime. The plan has been in operation for several years; the experiment has been tried, and at an enormous expense upon the people: it therefore becomes the imperative duty of the Legislature to inquire whether, under the present system, violations of penal law have been less frequent. Has reformation been the consequence of the infliction of punishment? Has it operated by example, to deter the evil disposed? Can many cases be pointed out, where liberated culprits have been induced to prefer a life of honest industry, and to refrain from the repetition of criminal offences? If these questions cannot be answered affirmatively, the conclusion is obvious, that the present penitentiary system has failed to answer all the great purposes for which it was established.

To call the attention of the Legislature to an investigation of the subject, and to point out briefly, some of the defects, is all that may be required. The great error as we apprehend, which has attended the plan, has been the promiscuous association of the convicts. When its inmates are permitted to enjoy the society of each other and to keep up a recollection and fondness for the vices, which produced their degradation, the terror of the penitentiary must lose its effects. The valuable improvement which has been made in the institution, of affording a separate apartment for each convict at night, no doubt will have a most beneficial tendency. During their labours by day, the vigilance of the keepers, may in some degree, prevent the corrupting intercourse to which their depraved minds must necessarily lead them; but when associated at night in the same chamber, they can give an unrestrained recital of their misdeeds and lay future plans of villany. We are inclined to the belief, that the remedy for the error has not yet been fully applied. The convicts engage in the same daily labour, and it would be utterly impossible to prevent the more hardened in crime from extending their baneful influence in some way or other over those committed for minor offences—conversation cannot be entirely prevented and if it could, a knowledge of each other is formed, which after liberation must bring them together to commit further depredations upon society. To correct this radical fault of improper association, the plan of classification may be adopted. It is certainly worthy of the experiment. But we