

and furnish to the Department a large share of information for which, when required it was necessary heretofore to apply to the Wardens of the respective Penitentiaries.

A collection is being made of all such statistics as may be serviceable for basis of reference or comparison, financially or otherwise.

Conformable to your views, a plan is in course of preparation which will enable the Wardens to prepare their annual estimates in a manner that will render an examination and comparison of them with those of the preceding year, and with the tenders for supplies for each fiscal year more practical and satisfactory.

As the Annual Report, under the existing law, embraces the the operations of the calendar year, and deals with two halves of the financial year—the last half of one and the first of another—I beg leave to recommend that, in future, it be prepared after the termination of the fiscal year.

To facilitate the examination of the estimates for supplies by comparing them with the contract prices, I think it necessary that the tenders be asked for in due season, to date from the 1st July instead of the 1st January, as at present. I make this recommendation after having ascertained from the Wardens, that, in their opinion, no disadvantage or difficulty will arise from such arrangement. If this plan be adopted, it would be necessary either to extend the existing contracts until 30th June, 1878, or ask for new ones from 1st January next for six months only, and then have them cover the fiscal year.

In consequence of a large share of the time of the clerk whom you assigned to assist me, in November, 1875, having been taken up with duties appertaining to the Law Department, during the ten months he remained in this office, it has not been possible to do more than attend to the current every-day duties. A change was made, some three months ago, and my present clerk has been fully occupied with the routine business of the office. The progress, therefore, in preparing and compiling statistics has been necessarily slow and limited. For the same reason a large arrearage of work, which has been accumulating for several years, remains to be disposed of. In view of placing this branch in proper working order, I have been obliged to make application for temporary aid. This you have consented to grant, upon being satisfied of its necessity.

The office, until a few weeks ago, was almost wholly deficient of reports, publications or documents of any kind bearing upon Penitentiaries or their management. For the last four years I endeavoured to procure such works as would be useful for reference, by sending our Annual Report and inviting an exchange from the Wardens and Governors of States' Prisons, in the United States, and from the Directors of Penal Prisons in Great Britain and Ireland. Except in rare instances, the courtesy was not reciprocated. Upon reporting this circumstance, you took the matter in hand, and through the action of the Secretary of State succeeded in obtaining from the United States authorities several reports of the penal institutions in America. It may be stated as a fact that but very meagre information of a profitable or practical nature, respecting administration, discipline, etc., can be gained from these reports. Very little, if any, light is thrown upon the system pursued in the respective institutions—financial operations and criminal statistics being alone considered. The Wardens or Governors of convict prisons do not, as a rule, go to any particular trouble to set forth in their reports the details of their administration, addressing as they do those who are presumed to be well acquainted with the systems in operation. Hence, if it be considered at all desirable or advantageous that those who are entrusted with Penitentiary administration should have their experience and range of information extended, it were necessary that they visit such institutions outside their own jurisdiction, as are reputed to be well conducted, to see for themselves how they are managed, and what there is in any department or in the whole system worth adopting.

The value and importance which attach to visits paid to outside convict establishments are exemplified by the Directors of the Ohio Penitentiary at Columbus, which is considered to be one of the most successfully managed prisons in America.