

have been hitherto, hotbeds of infamy, and nurseries of vice and crime.*

To this result of the introduction of the system of separate confinement in our common gaols, namely, the checking of the demoralization and corruption of which they have hitherto been the centres, I attach, as I have already intimated, even more importance than to its deterrent influences.

Fourthly. It would diminish immediately (by probably one-half) the average number of prisoners confined in our gaols, and consequently virtually more than double the accommodation of the gaols.

Fifthly. It would diminish the cost of the maintenance of our prisons to the same extent, or nearly to the same extent, as it reduced the average number of prisoners confined in them.

Sixthly. It would tend to bring about what is most desirable, a uniformity of punishment in prisons.

It is hardly necessary to observe that so long as prisoners are sentenced to hard labor, in the absence of any proper machinery in the majority of gaols systematically to enforce the sentence, there must be great inequalities in the penal discipline of different gaols. The severity of the prisoners' punishment will, in fact, be determined, not by the sentence of the judge, but by the extent to which, in any particular gaol, the authorities have the means or inclination to enforce hard labor.

It would have, moreover, this incidental advantage which is worth

*How much it concerns us to check the process of demoralization and corruption now going on among the prisoners in our gaols, will at once be admitted when it is remembered that the average number of annual imprisonments in the common gaols of Canada during the last five years, is between 11,000 and 12,000.

If any one needs proof of the frightful effects of the present system in our unimproved gaols, he will find it in the sad examples furnished in the separate report of Mr. Inspector Ferres for the year 1862; examples, be it remembered, all taken from one single prison, that of Montreal. Alluding to the revelations contained in Mr. Ferres' report as to the way in which criminals were manufactured in the Montreal gaol, a leading newspaper of Montreal remarks: "The gaols of our great towns are nurseries of vice. They breed, rear and educate criminals for the work of preying on society. They rob the community of the wealth that might be earned by felons if saved from this baneful education. They entail the heavy cost of catching, trying, and keeping incarcerated, at these prisons, educated felons."

To put an end to a system which bears such fruits, would be, indeed, a consummation devoutly to be wished; and this we might hope to do by the introduction of solitary confinement.