

extent; were it otherwise, a larger crop of criminals would be the result. An abatement or stand still in the commission of crime warrants reasonable ground for inferring that a fair share of prosperity obtains, over the country, and that remunerative employment is generally available. There is a noticeable difference, in the number of occupied cells, when times are prosperous and when financial and business depression prevails.

The prison of isolation—an adjunct to the penitentiary at Kingston, of which mention has been made in former annual reports—is approaching completion. It is quite likely the building will be ready for occupation towards the close of next summer. Meanwhile, inquiry is being made as to the best and most suitable modes of employment for the convicts in isolation, who must necessarily work in their cells. Light industries, which would not injure health by being carried on in the cells, by vitiating the air, such as mat-making, willow and rattan work, broom and cane chair-making, &c., would be suitable, and the very limited output from each kind of such handiwork would not interfere, to any appreciable extent, with outside manufacturers. The necessity of providing the convicts, not only in the prison of isolation, but in all the departments of the penitentiaries, with work calculated to elevate and reform, instead of lowering and degrading them, is evident and of the last importance.

There is no sensible or reasonable man, be he employer or employé, who gives the subject proper examination and study, who will not admit, first,—that it is most desirable our criminals should be reformed; secondly, that work is an indispensable factor to this end; thirdly, that idleness, or stone-breaking, or oakum picking, or any other kind of debasing habit or employment will not tend to effect the desired improvement; fourthly, that only remunerative labour is suitable; fifthly, that it is fit and proper such remunerative labour be supplied, in order that the convict contribute to his own maintenance and ease the taxpayer's burden in contributing to his support; and that he may learn a trade or habits of industry which would help him to earn his bread, when set free; sixthly, that it is not quite fair or consistent to object to convicts being employed at industrial pursuits, the proceeds of which may be placed on the market, when the labour of the same convicts, if at liberty, would be in competition with the labour of the very men who find fault. With reluctance, therefore, but in the public interest, which is deeply concerned in the reformation of our convicts and in their being made to do something towards their maintenance while undergoing sentence, I beg leave to recommend that every facility be granted for carrying on existing remunerative employments and extending them, as far as possible and necessary, as well for the moral improvement of the convicts as to furnish means to make the penitentiaries, in part at least, self-sustaining. This is done everywhere, in one way or other, whether under the contract, piece price or State account system. Whatever the plan adopted certain it is, that in all the penal prisons on the continent, in Great Britain and Ireland and in the United States, remunerative industries are in operation and the output of such industries is either taken and paid for by the Government, at a fixed price, or put upon the market. This is the general rule. Is Canada to be the sole exception? Can it be expected that the Government will ignore its obligation to consult for the public welfare, by not giving all the necessary aid and appliances for the reformation of its convicts? Would it be justifiable or defensible to deprive the penitentiary administration of one of the most efficacious means of converting idle, useless and habitual offenders into industrious, wage-earning and law-abiding citizens?