

## ST. JOHN PENITENTIARY.

During the visit which I paid to this Penitentiary, in March last, it became necessary to hold an enquiry into certain abuses which existed, and to which reference is made by the Warden in his report. After a very full investigation into the alleged misdoings, I came to the conclusion, that, although there had been serious departure from the rules, in many cases, on the part of certain officers, it was attributable to lack of judgment and experience rather than to any intentional disregard of the rules or of the duties imposed by them. Therefore, having carefully weighed all the evidence elicited, and the various concomitant circumstances, I did not think that the public interest demanded any action more rigorous than the severe reprimand which you authorized me to convey to the parties implicated. This was accompanied with the intimation that their continuance in the service would depend upon the manner in which they would conduct themselves and perform their duties. I am glad to inform you that no complaint has reached me for the last ten months, and that I have reason to believe that the administration has improved, the warning having had a salutary effect.

Here, too, a large increase has taken place in the number of convicts and short-term prisoners, in 1876. The number remaining, in 1875, was 108, viz., 54 convicts and 54 common prisoners. Of the convicts, 49 were males, and 5 females; and of the common prisoners, 41 males, and 13 females.

At the end of 1876 there were 74 convicts, 69 males and 5 females; and 88 common prisoners, 71 males, and 17 females, making a total of 162.

The average number of convicts and common prisoners in 1876 was 133, that is, 64 convicts and 69 common prisoners.

The average cost per head for the year was \$177.83, the total expenditure for maintenance having been \$21,709.63.

With regard to the common prisoners, who should never have been allowed to be mixed up with convicts, the following statistics, recently prepared with a view to enquiries you have been making on the subject, will show their number and what they have cost the Dominion, since Confederation. The total of the annual averages of common prisoners, from 1st July, 1867, to 31st December, 1876, has been 631.

The annual average about 74, and the average cost *per head per annum* \$185.02.

The total cost for the maintenance of common prisoners from the date of Confederation to the 31st ultimo, has been \$116,750.34.

The overcrowding of this Penitentiary with common prisoners, has been, for some time past, under your consideration, and this leads to the hope that something will be done to abate or remove this evil, which has been the greatest possible obstacle to the proper administration of the concern. Without any manner of doubt the Warden is placed at a heavy disadvantage in having to deal with these two classes of prisoners, with no means whatever of keeping them apart or of subjecting them to such rules and discipline as their relative condition demands.

The return of revenue shows a considerable falling off in 1876, as compared with 1875. This is owing to the general financial depression and to the great reduction in the prices of the articles manufactured, which the Warden was obliged to make in order to meet the keen and active competition in the market of American manufacturers.

Though the profit derived from the industries carried on is not very considerable, yet the advantage which they afford by giving employment to the prisoners cannot be overlooked. Without the manufactures now pursued, I cannot conceive how the prisoners could be employed.

In order to prevent a large number from being idle, I instructed the Warden, when at St. John in August last, to quarry stone on the premises, to give occupation at such work, and at stone-breaking. This was carried on while the weather permitted.

Three escapes of convicts occurred, chiefly on account of the decayed state of the stockade fence. It is possible some neglect or remissness may have been connected