

they cannot, however, refrain from quoting the forcible language of Dr. Wines, one of the Special Commissioners, when summing up the evidence taken by them in reference to the question whether the contract system was or was not favorable to the reformation of the convict :

“ Contractors have no interest in the reformation of prisoners, *per se*, and none in their preparation for a return to civil life. Their interests as contractors, and the interest of the Prison, as a Reformatory Institution, not only do not run in parallel lines, but they are repellent and antagonistic. Let any changes be suggested with a view to giving more time to the mental, moral, and industrial improvement of the prisoners ; for instance, that the number of religious exercises be increased, that the present fragmentary and wretched system of secular instruction be replaced with one more rational and effective, or that the prisoners be *taught a complete trade instead of a little piece of one as now*. Such suggestion would be sure to be met with their decisive objection. The contractors would not agree to such an arrangement, they would *not consent to such an abridgment of the convicts' labor*. Thus does this system of prison labor, by a necessary law, by an instinct of its very nature, oppose itself to all those great and vital forces of reformation, by which, if at all, the inmates of our prisons must be reclaimed, regenerated and re-absorbed into the mass of virtuous and honorable citizens.”

The Inspectors, having carefully observed for several years past the operation of the contract system in the Provincial Penitentiary, are constrained to state, that they entirely concur in the opinions expressed by the Commissioners, and that they do not hesitate to condemn this system as utterly wrong in principle, and as most objectionable in practice. But it will be asked,—If you do away with the practice of hiring out the labor of convicts to contractors, how do you propose to render that labor productive to the State? The answer is simple,—We propose to adopt the plan which has been found to answer so well in the Model Prisons of Europe, and especially in those of Ireland, and which is beginning to find favor among the social reformers of the continent. We propose, in fact, to employ the labor of the convicts who are now let out to contractors, in one of two ways ;

Either, 1st,—In carrying on for the benefit and on account of the State, such branches of industry as may be thought advisable within the walls of the Penitentiary, under the supervision and control of the officers of the institution;

Or, 2nd,—In carrying out such Public Works, in the more remote parts of the Dominion, as may be thought suitable for such purpose by the Government.

If the latter course were approved of, it would afford the Government an excellent opportunity of introducing, in a modified form at least, that most striking and valuable portion of the Irish Convict System, commonly known as the “ Intermediate Prisons,” for the introduction of which in Canada, in some form, the Board has so long and so earnestly contended. Among the Public Works which might, in the opinion of the Board, be advantageously carried out by means of convict labor, may be mentioned the construction of canals, and the drainage of wild lands in the interior of the country.

While condemning the system of hiring out the labor of convicts to contractors, the Inspectors are well aware that even if the Government approved of their views as to the expediency of not perpetuating in the Penitentiary the present system, it would not be practicable suddenly and all at once to abandon that system, nor indeed would it be desirable to do so ; the proposed change should be made *tentatively* and gradually, and all existing contracts should of course be respected, but none should be renewed unless for very short periods, and under peculiar circumstances. Above all, it would be worse than useless to attempt to inaugurate the new system in the Penitentiary, unless the institution were under the management of an able, intelligent and active Warden. At the same time, the Inspectors wish it to be understood, that they are most anxious to obtain the early sanction of the Government and of the Legislature, to the principle of employing the labor of convicts in the Penitentiary on such Public Works as the Government may think suitable.

IMPROVEMENT OF DISCIPLINE.

In their Report for 1865, the Inspectors briefly recapitulated certain important changes which they had, from time to time, recommended as being necessary in the discipline of