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EXTRACTS

FROM THE

SECOND REPORT

OF THE

INSPECTORS OF PRISONS

FOR THE HOME DISTRICT;

ADDRESSED TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE
HOME DEPARTMENT.

BY AUTHORITY.

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Circular of the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for the Home Department, to the Magistrates assembled at Quarter Session of the Peace and to the Justices of Boroughs.

Whitehall, August 15th, 1837.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honor to send you a volume of extracts from the Second Report of the Inspectors of Prisons for the Home District. You will find, in this volume, different plans of gaols or houses of correction, adapted for various numbers of prisoners, from four up to five hundred. You will observe that each of these plans contemplates the confinement of the prisoners in separate cells.

I proceed to lay before you the grounds upon which I am disposed to concur with the Home Inspectors, in the opinion that any new prisons to be erected should be constructed with a view to separate confinement.

The plan which has of late years been most generally adopted, in order to prevent the evils of contamination, proceeds on the principle of separation at night, and strict silence during the hours of labour. This plan is subject to the following objections:—

1. It requires numerous punishments in the gaol. You will observe, from the Report of the Coldbath Fields Prison, and from that of the Wakefield House of Correction, contained in the Report of the Inspector of the Northern District, that these punishments are large in number, and exceedingly vexatious in their nature. This practice is of itself a strong objection to the plan: it varies the punishment unequally in different cases; and the imprisonment contemplated by the sentence is thus aggravated by the infliction of fresh penalties.

2. A feeling of continual irritation is kept up, both by the observance of the rule and by the punishment for its violation. Persons confined in a prison should, if possible, be reduced to a quiet and submissive state,—whereby they may at leisure reflect on the evil of the course they have pursued, and some chance be afforded of their reformation. Instead of this, prisoners confined in society, and not debarred from communication, are invited, as it were, to a perpetual battle with authority,