

freedom, producing a knowledge of its blessings, and thereby, a proper appreciation of its value, are truths admitted by all who have intelligence to comprehend them. And to the enlightened representatives of the people of Maryland, it will scarcely be necessary to urge the propriety of appropriating liberally to this object, whenever the finances of the State will justify the expenditure.

The free school fund has been productive of great benefits, wherever it has been distributed. Many children, within our knowledge, who would otherwise have remained in ignorance from their unfortunate condition in life, have been taught those branches of learning, which may lay the ground work of their future usefulness. And we indulge the pleasing hope, that by the well directed exertions of the Legislature, the time will not be far distant, when no individual in the state, no matter how humble his situation, shall be deprived of the benefits of an education essential to his own happiness, and necessary to make him a useful member of society.

To ameliorate the condition of his fellow men, and to advance them in the comforts and happiness of life, are primary objects with a wise legislator. To effect these objects, his attention must necessarily be drawn to the repression of the vicious propensities of human nature, and of the evil consequences flowing from their indulgence. Among the plans devised by the benevolence of enlightened men, for the punishment of crime, and for the reformation of offenders, an efficient Penitentiary system stands pre-eminent.

It is here the sanguinary infliction of punishment upon those who have violated the laws of their country, has yielded to the humane substitutes, seclusion and labour. In the Penitentiary of Maryland, imprisonment and labour have been resorted to, as the punishment for crime. The plan has been in operation for several years; the experiment has been tried, and at an enormous expense upon the people: it therefore becomes the imperative duty of the legislature to inquire whether, under the present system, violations of penal law have been less frequent. Has reformation been the consequence of the infliction of punishment? Has it operated by example, to deter the evil disposed? Can many cases be pointed out, where liberated culprits have been induced to prefer a life of honest industry, and to refrain from the repetition of criminal offences? If these questions cannot be answered affirmatively, the conclusion is obvious, that the present penitentiary system has failed to answer all the great purposes for which it was established.

To call the attention of the Legislature to an investigation of the subject, and to point out briefly, some of the defects, is all that may be required. The great error as we apprehend, which has attended the plan, has been the promiscu-