

The administrative system adopted in 1867 was a board of commissioners, but it was soon found that there was no concerted action or interest taken, and that the whole work devolved on the secretary, who, by frequently visiting the prisons, conferring with the wardens and other officers and generally studying conditions, obtained a practical knowledge of prison matters that served as a substitute for similar action by the commissioners.

In 1875 this unsatisfactory condition resulted in the abolition of the Board of Commissioners and the vesting of practically all their powers and duties in the secretary under the title of Inspector of Penitentiaries. In 1901 a second inspector was appointed. The system adopted in 1875 is still continued. It is amusing to note that expert advisers within the past few years have recommended the adoption of the system of control by a board of commissioners as a "modern prison reform," in evident ignorance of the fact that the suggested system was tried and found wanting years ago, and that for forty years it has been obsolete.

The structural conditions in 1867 were open to severe criticism. The cells were extremely small, ill-ventilated and difficult of supervision. Important improvements have been made, especially since the structural work of the institutions has been carried on through this Department by convict labour, under the direction of its own officers. The cell dormitories constructed during the past twenty-five years are not really cells, but alcoves facing well-lighted and thoroughly ventilated corridors, and protected by a barrier of polished steel across the entire front of the alcove that impedes neither light nor ventilation. In the rear wall of the alcoves are upper and lower ventilators connecting with a central ventilating chamber that extends to the roof of the building. The cells or alcoves are fitted with folding bed and table, running water and sanitary closets and wash basins. On each range or row extending the entire length of the block there is a Marechal locking bar that enables an officer by a simple turn of the wrist to lock or unlock any or all of the prisoners on the range in a few seconds. I know of no prisons in any country that combine convenience, security and comfort in like degree. The ill-ventilated and ill-lighted cells that characterized the prisons of 1867 have all been replaced, and the general introduction of electric lighting since that date, replacing gas or oil lamps, has added materially to the proper ventilation and sanitary condition of the dormitories.

The policy of single or separate cell accommodation—that is, a separate cell for each convict—has been in operation in our penitentiaries since 1867, and has been strictly adhered to. The necessity for this is too obvious to require explanation. It is sufficient to state that men who come to us after having been "reformed" in institutions where the dual cell or the open dormitory system is in use, very frankly admit their having seen and participated in practices at those institutions that are not conducive to morality. Not infrequently these men show their appreciation of the safety and decency that the penitentiary cells afford.

During the past few years a great deal has been said and written