

Sir

I have the honor to solicit the attention of Your Excellency to the situation of the Catholic Prisoners of the Crown on their arrival in this Colony and to propose certain means which, I humbly conceive, will tend under the Blessing of Divine Providence, to their moral improvement.

The chief object hoped to be attained by the transportation of the prisoner is, the reformation of the individual. To this the external circumstances connected with the fact of transportation may contribute – but not changing or even reaching the heart – the school of vice as of virtue – Reformation of conduct will not be a necessary consequence of transportation and unfortunately experience proves that it is not.

Without the aid of religion, this most important object cannot be attained. Religion, Your Excellency will permit me to observe, is the instrument appointed by Divine Providence for this purpose – that, consequently, on which, in the work of Reformation, the chief reliance will be placed by a wise Government.

When the prisoners from Ireland land in this country they are generally well disposed to receive religious Instruction and support. It is remarked that those who have been under the care of their Clergyman for some time previous to the voyage and admitted to the sacred rites of their religion, conduct themselves with great propriety whilst on board, their example has also its effect upon their companions who may not have been similarly favored – so that on arriving in the Colony, by far the greater number is disposed to profit by the grace of Religion if this opportunity were afforded.

Unfortunately, however, by reason of the assignment which commences forthwith on landing, few only can attend their religious duties. Some commence their preparation and are interrupted – whilst the majority are hurried off at once – and it is much to be feared that the disposition to reform which had begun to manifest itself goes to decay unassisted by good counsel – hopeless – the forlorn prisoner is hastened to his destination soon to become like those with whom he is doomed to associate. As a partial remedy to this evil, I respectfully suggest to Your Excellency, that on landing, some few days – six or eight – may be given principally to Religious Instruction and spiritual Exercises, that all who wish to profit by this opportunity, to prepare for, and receive the Rite of their religion, may do so. They will be thus prepared to endure, in a proper Christian spirit, the difficulties and hardships of their state; they will be directed to that line of conduct, which, in ensuring the stability of their good purposes, will tend to give satisfaction to those under whom they may be placed, and in the faithful accomplishment of their painful and humiliating duties of their condition, open to themselves. Those sources of consolation from which can be derived the only means of alleviating its wretchedness.

The truly Christian solicitude, Your Excellency, has ever evinced to promote the reformation of the numerous victims of folly, ignorance and vice, or of misfortune, who are sent to these shores inspires me with confidence that Your Excellency will be pleased to approve and to cause to be carried into effect a suitable arrangement founded on the suggestions I have considered it my duty to propose.

I have the honor to be

Sir

Your Excellency's most obedient, humble servant

† J B Polding