

NEW JAIL IN WASHINGTON COUNTY, DISTRICT OF
COLUMBIA.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 899.]

MARCH 3, 1859.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. MORGAN, from the Committee for the District of Columbia, made
the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, having had under consideration the expediency of erecting a new jail for the District of Columbia, respectfully report :

That the present jail is in every way unsuited for the purposes of a prison. Owing to the bad material used in its construction, and to unskilful workmanship, it is insecure; from imperfect ventilation, it is liable to dangerous, contagious diseases; from bad arrangement, it is extremely difficult to subject the prisoners to the necessary police and discipline; and the necessity of confining almost constantly within its walls a much larger number of prisoners than it was designed to accommodate, prevents the possibility of separating the young from the confirmed and most degraded criminals, and even compels innocent persons, detained merely to secure their presence as witnesses before the criminal court, to share common cells and corridors with convicts. The committee further report that the location of the jail is in the midst of the population of the city and upon one of the finest of the public squares, surrounded by churches and by the dwellings of worthy citizens, whose women and children are constantly insulted by the indecent words and ribald songs of the prisoners. These facts, which have been repeatedly represented by grand juries of the District of Columbia to the criminal court, by most respectable citizens in memorials to the executive department and to Congress, by the Commissioner of Public Buildings in his official reports, and by the published letter (accompanying the Commissioner's last annual report) of the United States marshal for the District of Columbia, have been confirmed by the personal observation and inspection of congressional committees, and are minutely set forth in the papers which your committee submit with this report.

The power to remedy this great evil is in the general government alone, and, in the judgment of your committee, it is a power which it is the duty of the government to exercise without delay.

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Congress, by act of August 18, 1856, directed the Secretary of the Interior to cause to be prepared drawings and specifications for a new jail, together with estimates of the cost of building the same, on a site prescribed by the act; and that officer, with his annual report dated November 29, 1856, submitted the drawings, specifications, and estimates called for, but at the same time submitted conclusive objections to the site prescribed. Your committee are informed by the Commissioner of Public Buildings that the government now own grounds in the city of ample area for the construction of a jail upon the plan submitted by the Secretary of the Interior, and in locality, foundation, and advantage of drainage, well adapted for such purpose. Your committee therefore recommend the erection of a new jail in the city of Washington, according to the general plan submitted by the Secretary of the Interior with his report of November 29, 1856, and upon such site, now the property of the United States, as that officer may select; and for that purpose they report a bill.