

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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THE LEGISLATURE,

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1834.

FOURTEENTH LEGISLATURE.

NO. 38.

SENATE.

STATE OF MAINE.

In Senate, Feb. 24, 1834.

The Joint Select Committee to whom were referred the Order to inquire into the expediency of ascertaining the number of Blind persons within this State of thirty years of age and under, and also to consider the expediency of making an appropriation for their Education, and the petition of Lewis Gordon praying for assistance from this State to enable him to obtain admission into the Institution for the Education of the Blind in Boston, have had the same under consideration and ask leave to Report :

That the attention of the people of this country has but recently been directed to the adoption of

any measures for the relief of the **Blind**. A long night of darkness has been permitted to close upon them, without any public effort to soften the severity of their visitation or to dissipate its gloom. Bereft of all the advantages and pleasures of sight and subjected to all the privations and distresses incident to the absence of it, they have been suffered to remain in a condition of great depression, alleviated only by the commiseration, sympathy and kindness of individuals. The spirit of benevolence, which, in modern times, has achieved so much to meliorate the condition of man, has penetrated the darkness which had so long encircled this afflicted portion of the community, and inspired them with fresh hopes and permanent comforts. "It is perhaps difficult to conceive any two situations in the infinite varieties of civilized life, more different from each other, in respect to happiness, than the condition of a blind person, with his faculties benumbed by sloth, and his spirits depressed by the consciousness of being a burden to those about him, and that of the same individual engaged in constant employment, and feeling that he contributes, by his daily occupation, to the comforts of a family of which he forms a part." As early as eighteen hundred, a **School** for the in-

struction of indigent blind, was established in London, and the benefits which have flowed from it, have exceeded not merely the anticipations of its founders, but have excited the greatest surprise and produced the highest satisfaction. A similar institution has been formed in Paris, the beneficent influence of which has not been less extensive and gratifying. Nor are these the only institutions established for this purpose on the continent. The instruction which has been imparted at these establishments to the blind, has demonstrated that they are equally susceptible of the advantages of education with those who can see. All doubts respecting the practicability of giving an education to this class of persons, by which they may be raised, in a good degree, to an equality with such as are favored with sight, have been thus entirely removed. In an account of the School for the Indigent Blind in London, published in eighteen hundred and thirteen, it is stated, "that those, who may be desirous of seeing to what extent the situation and faculties of the blind are capable of improvement, may easily satisfy themselves on that head, by visiting the School—they need not be apprehensive with meeting with any thing which can shock their feelings or

give rise to melancholy reflections—they will not find the pupils sitting (as is commonly the case with the blind) in listless indolence, or brooding in silence over their own defects and their inferiority to the rest of mankind ; but they will behold a number of individuals of a class hitherto considered as doomed to a life of sorrow and discontent, not less animated in their amusements during the hours of recreation, and far more cheerfully attentive to their work in those of employment, than persons possessed of sight.” Prompted by the noble examples of other countries, and encouraged by the success that has attended the instructions which have been given in our own country to the **Deaf and Dumb**, a number of distinguished individuals of **Massachusetts**, in the year eighteen hundred and twenty-nine, obtained an Act of incorporation of the **New England Institution for the Education of the Blind**. That Institution has been liberally endowed by the splendid donation of a munificent individual in **Boston**, and by the generous subscriptions of other individuals in the **Commonwealth of Massachusetts**. It is the first Institution of the kind which has been established in this country. It is designed, as its corporate name denotes, particularly for the accom-

modation of pupils in the New England States. The opportunity which it affords for the Education of the indigent blind of our own State should, in the opinion of the Committee, be promptly and gratefully embraced. The present year, the State of Pennsylvania have appropriated the sum of twenty thousand dollars, and munificent individuals of the City of Philadelphia have subscribed the additional sum of fifty thousand dollars, for the establishment of an Institution for the education of this class of persons. If additional considerations were needed, to convince any one of the benefits and importance of imparting instruction to this portion of our population, and to indicate very clearly the propriety of this Legislature's making an appropriation for the education of indigent blind of our State in the New England Institution at Boston, the recollection of the very interesting and impressive exhibition, by Dr. Howe, the Director of that Institution, of two pupils under his care, in the Representatives' Hall, a short time since, and the remarks which he made on that occasion, respecting the advantages of educating this description of persons, cannot fail to produce such effect, upon the minds of all, who witnessed the touching spectacle. Entertaining such

views in regard to the subject referred to them, the Committee have agreed to recommend the passage of a **Resolve** requiring the **Selectmen** of the several towns, the **Assessors** of the several plantations and the **Aldermen** of the cities in this State, to ascertain and make return of the number of blind persons in their respective towns, plantations and cities, within the ages of thirty and six, to the **Secretary of State** in the month of **January** next, and also the passage of a **Resolve** appropriating the sum of one thousand dollars, to be expended by the **Governor** with advice and consent of the **Council**, for the educating such indigent blind of this State, in the **New England Institution** for the instruction of this class of persons, at **Boston**, as they, in their discretion and judgment, may deem the most proper objects of the bounty of the State. They also recommend to the **Governor** and **Council** the consideration of the application of **Lewis Gordon** for pecuniary aid to obtain admission into the **Institution** for the education of the **Blind** at **Boston**. To carry into effect the said objects the Committee have prepared the **Resolves** herewith submitted.

WILLIAMS EMMONS, *Chairman.*

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, February 24, 1834.

ORDERED, That three hundred copies of this Report be printed for the use of the Legislature.

[Extract from the Journal.]

Attest, WILLIAM TRAFTON, *Secretary*.