

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE.

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FORTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE.

SENATE.

No. 59.

The Joint Standing Committee on the State Prison, in pursuance of a joint order of the Legislature, of Jan. 11th, authorizing them to visit that institution, complied with the order on Thursday the 31st ultimo, and spent the day and evening in visiting its industrial and other departments; and in examining, through the records of the Clerk, its financial condition, which they find in accordance with the recent report of the Inspectors. In visiting the various workshops, the Committee were forcibly impressed with the order and activity which were seen in every direction. The convicts apparently regarded the labor engaged in more as a matter of personal interest voluntarily pursued, than as a task to be reluctantly performed. The cheerfulness and alacrity evinced in responding to inquiries or suggestions of the Warden, showed that he possesses to a large extent their confidence and regard.

The key to the secret of the excellent discipline existing throughout the prison is found in the fact that the convicts see in the Warden not only a superintendent and master, but an efficient and available friend. Your Committee think it fortunate for the State as well as the prisoner, that Mr. Rice is enabled to bring to his aid in the discharge of his responsible duties an unusually keen business tact and skill, combined with a philanthropy and sagacity which look to the reformation and elevation of the prisoner, as well as his punishment. It is not difficult to see that it is as important to the State as beneficial to the prisoner, that he be as thoroughly reformed as possible before his sentence shall expire, and he again mingle with the population of the State, worthily or unworthily employing the privileges of a restored citizenship.

The Committee were especially pleased to observe the superior quality of the articles manufactured, the result of good materials and good workmanship combined. Upon a careful inspection of the carriages, boots, shoes, &c., there produced, the Committee were enabled to understand why these articles compete success-

fully in the markets of the State and elsewhere with those of a similar class manufactured in other localities; and how the institution under such superintendence has become more than self-sustaining. If we were to indulge in the luxury of a pleasure carriage, were to purchase one for business purposes, or provide boots and shoes for ourselves and families, especially were we desirous of an elegant outfit in these things, we should, if practicable, patronize the "State institution" at Thomaston. It is clear that the improved financial condition of the prison is owing to the superior management of the Warden and Inspectors, assisted by an efficient corps of subordinate officers; while much of the reformatory influence is to be traced to a source not at the first glance so obvious. We refer to the generous and self-sacrificing labors of Mrs. Rice, whose mission it has been, since her residence at the prison, to spend a considerable part of each Sabbath in visiting the prisoner in his cell, in proffering him her womanly sympathies for his misfortunes, and her assistance as an instructor in reading, writing, arithmetic, &c., of a knowledge of which many of the convicts are either entirely ignorant or nearly so. Since the completion of the new Chapel, such convicts as are disposed meet there regularly, are formed into classes and receive from Mrs. Rice such instruction as is adapted to their wants. The present number comprising these classes is between thirty and forty. The Committee need not enlarge upon the importance and effect of such an influence, or speak of its tendency to light in the bosom of the prisoner the lamp of hope, and inspire him to seek a higher plane of manhood. But the physical ability of Mrs. Rice is not equal to a continuation of this exhaustive labor. Indeed, your Committee believe she has already done more in this direction than a prudent regard for her health would have permitted, and that she should, as soon as practicable, be relieved from this indispensable labor. Indispensable, we say, for the State cannot afford to ignore the moral and intellectual elevation of these unfortunate people. Something should be done to meet the emergency; and those having the care of the prison believe, and your Committee believe, that a Chaplain should be provided for the institution, whose duty it should be to devote his entire time to the moral, religious and educational culture of the prisoners. We believe that this is required alike by the philanthropy of the age in which we live, and the true financial interests of the state.

The Warden and Inspectors also ask an appropriation of funds from the State Treasury, for reconstructing and enlarging the western wing of the prison, or the old prison building, in order to obtain such cell-room, and cooking and sanitary facilities, as the

increased number of convicts and a just regard for their proper accommodation require; for the purchase of buildings and lots for the occupancy of the subordinate officers of the prison, and for the extension of the carriage shop, and other necessary repairs. The east wing or main prison is a substantial stone building, 113 feet long by 45 feet wide, three stories high, enclosing a block of cells 108 in number. These are the only cells in which convicts can be securely confined. The west wing is 110 feet long by 22 feet wide, two stories high, constructed partly of brick and partly of stone. In this wing are the cook-room, guard-room, and what are called "hospital cells," in the upper story; while nearly the whole of the lower story remains about as it was built, divided into dark stone dungeons which are not used at all except, occasionally, some convict who persists in disobedience, defying all moral means to restrain him, is introduced into one of them, and there allowed an opportunity to reflect until he is apparently penitent, and makes good promises for the future. In the attic are the guards' sleeping rooms. The Hospital is, as the Physician in his report says, entirely unfit for sick people to be in; and the cook-room is much too small, dark, and inconvenient every way. It is proposed to entirely reconstruct the whole of this wing, making it about 23 feet wider, and adding an additional story, and, in that way, make room for the construction of a suitable hospital, cook-room, and about 66 additional cells. This enlargement will very much improve the architectural symmetry of the whole prison, increase its capacity to the requisite extent, and render it entirely secure. There should also be more shop and storage room before even the present number of convicts can be employed to advantage. The carriage shop is about 150 feet long by 40 wide, and it is proposed to make an addition to the western end at least 40 feet in length. It would, undoubtedly, be for the interest of the State if it owned a few dwelling houses for the use of the officers of the prison; and the Committee advise that the Warden of the prison, with the advice of the Inspectors, and the approval of the Governor and Council, be authorized to purchase for the State, certain lots with dwelling houses thereon for that purpose, provided they can be obtained at a reasonable price. The Committee, in order that the improvements referred to above may be effected, submit the accompanying Resolves.

Respectfully submitted.

Per order.

T. B. READ, *Acting Chairman.*

STATE OF MAINE.

RESOLVES in favor of the state prison.

Resolved, That the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars is hereby appropriated for the reconstruction and enlargement of the westerly wing of the state prison, for the purchase of dwelling-houses and lots, for the extension of the carriage-shop, and other necessary repairs.

Resolved, That the warden of the state prison, with the advice of the inspectors, and approval of the governor and council, is authorized to purchase certain lots with dwelling-houses thereon, for the use of the subordinate officers of the prison.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, February 15, 1867.

Report accepted, resolves laid on the table, and on motion of Mr. READ ordered to be printed.

THOMAS P. CLEAVES, *Secretary.*