

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIFTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE.

HOUSE.

No. 58.

STATE OF MAINE.

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The Committee on State Reform School, to which was referred all matters relating to that institution, have had the same under consideration, and ask leave to submit the following report and accompanying resolve.

Per order.

JOHN E. WARREN.

The Committee on the State Reform School, to which was referred the annual report of the trustees and officers of that institution, have carefully considered the same, and also in compliance with an order of the Legislature, visited the School on the 10th instant, were politely received by the trustees and officers, shown through the several departments of the institution, their mode of operation explained, the defects of the present policy indicated, and the future line of action, which they desire to follow, pointed out.

There are, at present, in the School, one hundred and thirty-two boys, of ages ranging from eight to eighteen years, the great majority, however, being between the ages of twelve and sixteen, reasonably well dressed, cleanly, respectful, of fair personal appearance and intelligence, and but few of them showing marked traces of mental incapacity or hardened criminality.

For the purpose of instruction, the boys are divided into three distinct schools, at present, of about equal numbers, the primary, intermediate, and higher schools, each in a separate room and under the charge of a teacher. Your Committee were entirely satisfied with the methods of instruction adopted, the standard of scholarship gained, and with the general appearance and conduct of the school, and consider that, in the person of Mr. Stanley the Assistant Superintendent and principal teacher, his wife, and other assistants, the State have secured invaluable assistants. We especially commend the manner of instruction and progress made in the useful branches of writing and arithmetic.

In the sewing and knitting room we found some thirty of the smallest boys engaged in making and mending garments for the inmates. Your Committee were satisfied with the diligence of the boys and quality of the work performed; but if some employment better suited to the tastes of these boys, and of a character more likely to be followed by them in future years, could be substituted for this, even throughout the winter season, leaving them to work on the farm and garden in the summer, we consider it would be of great advantage to the boys, and no detriment to the institution, as a much smaller number of boys, by the aid of one sewing machine, could keep the inmates clothed.

In the shoe department we found a smaller number of the boys engaged in bottoming slippers and making or repairing coarse but substantial shoes for the boys. As they are not held to this work so closely as to injure them physically, your Committee consider this work as better suited to the tastes of the boys and more likely to be of benefit to them in after life than that in the first mentioned department. The chair bottoming shop, the principal labor department of the institution, was idle for want of work, and although your Committee consider this as a more desirable class of employment than either of the others mentioned, we submit that it ought if practicable be so extended as to include the manufacture of something more than merely the cane bottom, thereby securing more varied and permanent work. It should be the effort, as far as practicable, to give the boys some useful trade, and your Committee also suggest that it may be expedient to stimulate the boys by giving those who are well behaved and industrious, some slight share or compensation for their labor.

The boys at present sleep in cells containing a decent cot bed. This system your Committee, in common with the trustees and officers, consider in every way objectionable, as being unnecessary for security, degrading in its influence, tending to promote secret vice, and contrary to the reformatory character of the school.

The dining hall is in the lower or basement story, the boys sitting at long tables without cloths, and eating from tin dishes, with iron spoons, and although the hall is neat and commodious, and the boys were orderly and respectful, the whole affair had a cheerless aspect, suggesting simply a feeding place.

The wonderful degree of health maintained in the institution for the past year, as well as the present condition of the boys, prevent any severe strictures upon the quality or quantity of the food served; yet we submit whether the highest result in regard to health and physical development has yet been reached.

The condition of the farm, brick-yard, etc., your committee, owing to the season, were unable to determine. The fine barn and surroundings, the horses, oxen and cows, farming implements, etc., were all in good condition, indicating care, neatness and economy in the out-door management.

The building, although poorly constructed originally, evidently rests on good foundations, as the outer walls are intact, which could not be the case had any settling occurred. These walls have been pointed up and painted, and the building presents a fine out-

ward appearance ; and the present slight defects in the exterior construction can be remedied without great expense.

The interior is considerably out of repair, the floors deeply worn and in some parts needing soon to be replaced, and considerable of the plastering is cracked or has fallen off. Your committee consider that the true policy in regard to this, as well as all other public buildings, is to keep them in repair by a small annual outlay, rather than to put off and make extensive general repairs only when they are imperatively demanded.

Your committee, therefore, in view of these facts, believing that this institution is a necessity, and that it is the part of true wisdom and economy so to conduct it as to obtain the highest results in the intellectual and moral education of those whom crime or misfortune has placed under its care, by placing before them every incentive to become good and useful men and respected citizens. respectfully recommend that you appropriate to this institution a somewhat larger sum than will be necessary to pay the estimated current expense, for the ensuing year, for the following purposes :

1st. To provide suitable sleeping apartments, either by removing the cells from one wing, leaving the others to be used when needed, or by partitioning off the central space, so that the boys may be directly under the eye of an assistant or keeper.

2d. To fit up and furnish the dining hall in a more cheerful and home-like manner, replacing the benches by suitable tables and providing earthen ware, knives and forks, and other necessaries.

3d. To provide additional work-shops, and if possible, establish other branches of manufacturing that shall give the boys more of a trade than those now in operation.

4th. To provide additional water supply and some security against destruction by fire.

5th. To provide water closets and better sewerage for the buildings.

6th. To fit up a vault in one of the towns for the safe keeping of the records and valuables of the institution.

7th. For general repairs.

Your committee consider that so far as practicable, the boys should be graded in regard to character and conduct, that those who are in any way hardened by vice may not exert an undue influence over the others ; and that every inducement that may show to them the material benefits arising from well-doing should be presented. And this end we urgently recommend the Trus-

tees and officers to keep in view in all their modifications and changes in the dining room, sleeping apartments, labor departments, or the liberties granted, that the institution may become to those who by patient continuance in well-doing, show a desire to reform, not a place of punishment, but a well ordered home where they may be trained and educated in all that will increase their self-respect and usefulness.

Your committee further desire to express their confidence in the present Board of Trustees and Officers, as men deeply interested in the welfare and progress of the school, fully alive to its defects and failures, and with definite ideas in regard to improvements; and believe that all the appropriations you may make will be honestly and judiciously expended.

Hoping for your full concurrence, we beg leave to submit the following resolve.

EDMUND RUSSELL,
ALBION DYER,
JNO. E. WARREN,
ISAIAH WOODMAN,
JOHN WENTWORTH,
BENJ. HUNTER,
J A. SANBORN,
A. K. GILE.

STATE OF MAINE.

RESOLVE in favor of state reform school.

Resolved, That there be, and hereby is appropriated,
2 the sum of twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) for the
3 uses of state reform school, to meet the current ex-
4 penses of the ensuing year and make the improve-
5 ments indicated in the accompanying report.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
February 14, 1874. }

Reported from the Committee on Reform School, by Mr. WARREN, and on his motion, ordered printed.

S. J. CHADBOURNE, *Clerk.*