

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIFTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE.

HOUSE.

No. 6.

To W. W. THOMAS, JR., *Speaker of the*
House of Representatives:

The undersigned, sub-committee of the Committee of Agriculture, of the Legislature of 1874, appointed to visit the College of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts, and report to the next Legislature, have attended to that duty and submit the accompanying report.

SAMUEL WASSON,
IVORY LORD.

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
January 20, 1875. }

Read and accepted.

S. J. CHADBOURNE, *Clerk.*

[Order in relation to the appointment of a sub-committee of the Committee on Agriculture to visit State College.]

STATE OF MAINE.

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
February 24, 1874. }

Ordered, The Senate concurring, that a sub-committee of one on the part of the Senate and two on the part of the House, of the Committee on Agriculture, be appointed to visit the State College of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts, once during the summer months, to inspect the farm operations, suggest improvements, and report thereon to the next Legislature.

Read and passed, and sent up for concurrence.

S. J. CHADBOURNE, *Clerk*.

IN SENATE, February 25, 1874.

Read and passed in concurrence.

SAMUEL W. LANE, *Secretary*.

*To the Senate and House of
Representatives of the State of Maine :*

The undersigned, sub-committee of the Committee on Agriculture, appointed under an order of the Legislature, February 24, 1874, a copy of which is hereto prefixed, beg leave to submit the following

REPORT.

The Committee were unanimous in the opinion that it would be advisable to make the contemplated visit to the college in the latter part of the summer, after the crops had been harvested or had arrived at an advanced state of maturity; accordingly, by agreement, we proceeded to Orono on the 8th of September, and made such inspection of the farm and farming operations as the scope of the order under which we were appointed seemed to contemplate.

On first viewing this institution one is impressed with the idea that as yet it has scarcely passed the incipient stages of its existence; the college buildings, the farm, and the appurtenances connected therewith not having assumed that staid and sober appearance which long established institutions present. And this is the fact. The establishment of such an institution, the land almost in a wild state, and absolutely without buildings, requires an outlay of money which is almost appalling, and not until the expiration of years does it assume the appearance of a fixture in the land. Hence, the trustees of the college, having been continually obliged to make such heavy draughts on the "Construction fund," have, from the first, labored under the disadvantage that an inadequate amount of funds implies, and have been under the necessity of "making a little do a great deal;" for, bear in mind, no part of the Congressional Fund can be expended for lands or buildings—the interest of this only is available, and this only for the payment of the salaries of the Faculty,—so that all other outlays must come from funds appropriated by the State, or from individual munificence.

The farming operations seemed to the Committee to be conducted judiciously, and with a view as far as possible, to profit. Aside from the labor of the Superintendent, and two teamsters, the labor of the farm has been performed by the students of the

college. These are allowed compensation for their labor at a rate not exceeding ten cents an hour, the maximum time employed to be three hours per day. The cost of labor thus employed, little if any, exceeds, that of ordinary farm hands.

Owing to the limited amount of money at the disposal of the Superintendent, it has not been possible to furnish employment to all the students who have desired it, notwithstanding many needed improvements await accomplishment.

Many experiments are being conducted, with great labor and care, in the application of various kinds of manure to grass lands, potatoes, garden vegetables, &c., which ought in some manner to be laid before the farmers of the State, so that their benefits should not be lost. Accurate experiments, whether successes or failures in a pecuniary point of view, are equally valuable; the one shows what to do, the other what to leave undone. Individual experiments are so costly that they ought not to live and die with the experimenter, but should be scattered broadcast over the State, that farmers may profit by them.

We would suggest, that so far as practicable, the farm connected with the State College be made an experimental station, the results of which, perhaps, might be embodied in the annual reports of the Secretary of the Board of Agriculture, and thereby be made generally available. There are still many debatable questions; such as under-draining, plowing in clover and other green crops, soiling cattle, the best breeds of cattle for butter-making, cheese-making, and scores of others, which might be definitely settled for the whole State by experiments on this farm. Most of the experiments with manures, cattle, swine, poultry, &c., accounts of which are published and thus brought within the reach of the ordinary farmers of the State, are tried with a view to obtaining premiums offered by agricultural societies, so that we do not have that implicit confidence in their accuracy or in their general results, which we should if conducted with the single purpose of arriving at truth. Experiments could be here conducted by the students, with proper supervision, with no motive to make them anything but accurate, their labor to receive proper compensation, thus enabling many a poor boy to obtain a liberal education who would otherwise find such an education hopelessly beyond his reach.

The number of boys who enter the College is far less than it would be if they could rely upon employment upon the farm or in

the workshops, to defray in part the expenses of the College course. Some of them who commence in the anticipation of pecuniary aid from some brother, sister, or friend, and fail to receive it, are obliged to abandon the course, give up their dream of a liberal education and turn their faces again to some home far away. This is to be regretted, and but for want of working capital to develop the resources of the farm, it need not be.

The farm Superintendent, on our visit, called the attention of the committee to a tract of some twelve or fifteen acres of land, from which the growth of wood and timber had recently been removed, which was very much needed for a pasture, but required considerable labor to remove and burn the brush and debris and seed down to grass; and though any number of boys were ready to take hold of it at a moment's call, it could not be done for want of money to pay them the ten cents an hour which they could claim in payment. Would this be deemed good management of a farm if owned by an individual? If not, is it good management of a farm owned by the State whose motto is "Dirigo"? There is a vast amount of work which ought to be done on this farm; fences to be built, stone to be removed, ditches to be dug, roads to be laid out and built, all of which a well-to-do farmer would not hesitate to do for himself, but here cannot be done for want of money. Whether such improvements would pay dividends on the capital required to make them, may yet be a question; but if it will pay for an individual it would pay for the State.

It is not desirable that all to which we have alluded be done at once. The work laid out should cover a series of years, that class after class of students may have a hand in it, and receive the practical education thus to be obtained. Indeed, such work must be in progress continually.

Other improvements are needed. A dwelling house for the superintendent near the barn that has recently been finished, cannot but be considered indispensable by any one who gives the matter thought and attention. In the old house now occupied by him, there are absolutely no dairy accommodations, nothing that could be dignified by the name of a dairy-room, on the premises. Now, we submit that such a state of things, on a farm connected with the State College, cutting a hundred tons of hay, and with a prospect of cutting two hundred tons before many years, with a large and increasing herd of thoroughbred cows, ought to be

remedied at an early day. A substantial dwelling near the barn, so that the Superintendent may have the care of the stock constantly under his eye, is certainly one of the improvements that cannot be delayed.

Of the barn every farmer in the State may well be proud. It is large, commodious, substantial, permanent. We think few farmers can examine it without feeling a laudable ambition warming within them to have a similar structure on their own premises. Strangers who visit it in years to come will ask, not "how much it cost to excavate that cellar?" but "who was the architect, and who carried out his design?"

Some of the Committee on Agriculture, (and one at least who was put on the sub-committee) who visited the college during the session of the Legislature, were of the opinion that the location of the barn was not the most desirable. But a view of the premises in the summer season is sufficient to dispel the idea. We ask of those who differ from us in this opinion, to acquaint themselves with the matter in all its bearings, as we have endeavored to do, before deciding that our conclusions are erroneous.

We believe that a little pride in a State institution like this is justifiable; that though rigid economy should be observed in expenditures, we should be willing, nay, desirous, to see better buildings, better stock, better crops, and greater conveniencies, on this farm than ordinary farmers can have or expect at home. If the officers of the Institution are competent, industrious, faithful and honest, no narrow jealousies should induce us to withhold that support which is necessary to give it a vigorous and efficient existence.

Over the expenditure of money which is appropriated from time to time by the Legislature, it is eminently proper that the people should exercise a vigilant and intelligent supervision. Unlimited confidence in any board of officers, however competent and reliable, would not be the part of wisdom. The Legislature, through a proper committee, should at all times exercise, if not a controlling, an advisory supervision with the trustees. Such a Board of Trustees as have at heart the best interests of the institution, would at all times gladly listen to the suggestions and counsel of a committee. Fortunately, the Board of Trustees of this institution are of the highest character—above the breath of suspicion—and in whatever they do or advise, are actuated only by a common desire to promote the welfare and success of the college. If they

should not sometimes err in judgment they must be endowed with higher attributes than ordinary human nature is supposed to possess. The services of some of them have been gratuitously rendered for years, and none have received more than expenses in making necessary visits.

Hon. A. D. White, President of the Cornell University, in an address says, in relation to the expenditure of the Congressional fund: "I can bear testimony that never have funds been more carefully applied, and made to do more in furthering the great purpose. I know every one of these institutions, and I know not one which is not making a noble return for all it has received." We do not hesitate to add our testimony, that in our judgment the funds appropriated to this institution have been faithfully and judiciously expended. Occasionally the trustees have assumed responsibilities that might have been deemed unwarrantable by those not fully cognizant of all the circumstances, but viewed from a different standpoint, with the light that a full comprehension of the situation would afford, a candid judge could scarcely withhold entire approbation. Unforeseen emergencies will arise, and expenditures must be made to meet them. It is only to meet imperative and unexpected cases that money is turned from the use for which it was appropriated.

We believe that the farmers, mechanics, and working men of Maine, generally, should be especially willing to accord to this institution a hearty and generous support, from the fact that it is more nearly allied to their several avocations than any other State institution. While we realize the importance of the closest scrutiny in all our appropriations, especially at a time when our finances are in a transition state, we should very much regret the adoption of a policy so close as to cripple the institution which is so nearly connected with the progress of these classes of our fellow citizens. If we hope for a more rapid advancement in the standard of practical education, it must be looked for through the teachers that this college must furnish.

And here permit us to say, what every thinking person of course knows, that expenditures for educational purposes do not and cannot be expected to return again in *per cent.* dividends. The estimated value of all the school property in the State in 1873, was a few dollars short of \$3,000,000, and the aggregate amount expended for current public school purposes, was \$1,162,459. Not a dollar of this vast amount is ever returned to the State or

municipal treasuries; nobody expects it, or even desires it. The general intelligence of the commonwealth is the ample return for this vast outlay. More than a million dollars is annually expended for the education of the youth of our State, the great mass of whom must always be workers, performing manual as well as mental labor. "Agriculture and the mechanic arts will be the leading pursuits of those who are to perform this labor, and their highest success in these requires a proper training of mind and body." This can only be accomplished through the agencies of such a school as this. The teachers who are to instruct the many in those branches "related to agriculture and the mechanic arts," (that is, the business in which more than 90 per cent. of our people are, and always must be engaged) are to come from this or kindred schools. It is the industrial classes that are to be the beneficiaries of this college for all coming time, for it must ever be its leading object to instruct in those branches allied to industrial pursuits, and "any other application of the proceeds of the Congressional fund would be such a perversion of the intention of Congress as ought to work a forfeiture of the grant itself."

Schools devoted to the learned professions are numerous, and firmly established by the munificent endowments of generations. Shall this, the "People's College," the "forlorn hope" of the laboring classes, be allowed to languish for want of the fostering care of the State? The aggregate value of farms, farming implements and machinery, and live stock of the State of Maine, according to the last census, is more than 130 millions dollars; the amount of capital invested in the various manufactures is forty millions more, so that 170 millions of the 225 millions, (which is the State valuation at this time) is invested in agriculture and manufactures. These pursuits, and the people engaged therein, are mainly to receive the advantages of this college. A tax of one-eighth of one mill on the dollar of this amount, per annum, would give an annual revenue of over \$21,000. It cannot be that this amount would be grudgingly paid for this purpose, if the question were well understood. It may be said, as it so often is, in reply, that "it is the last feather that breaks the camel's back;" admitted; but then, this ought not to be the last feather that is to make up the burden, if the animal is to be overladen.

The crying need of educational interests in all departments still is, a want of competent teachers, and especially is this so in those branches of learning relating to agriculture and the mechanic

arts. Scientific instructors in agricultural chemistry, and in art training, are scarcely to be found on this side of the ocean. "The old system of apprenticeship by which young persons were trained to become skillful workmen in the various trades, is now nearly abandoned, so that it is difficult for boys to obtain such industrial training as will make them skillful artisans." These causes render such a school as that at Orono more imperatively necessary at this time than ever before. Add to this the rapid increase of population in the United States, which renders a more scientific and thorough system of agriculture necessary, and the importance of such a school is doubled. Less than thirty years will give us a population of a hundred millions within the present limits of the United States. The time is not far distant when the question of subsistence will be a more serious one than it is to-day; when the maximum amount of wheat or corn per acre will be more necessary than our people at present realize it possible; when this robbing the surface soil of all its elements of productiveness, and then removing to others which in turn are to receive the same treatment, must be forever abandoned. It will be wise economy to provide our children with such instruction as shall prepare them for these changes that inevitably await them.

We would suggest that it might be proper for the Committee on Education to visit the State college in connection with the Committee on Agriculture. Educational matters, of whatever nature, should have the benefit of the counsel of that committee, and it is fair to presume that their judgment upon the qualifications of instructors employed, and upon the quality and thoroughness of the instruction given, would be better than that of the Committee on Agriculture; besides, it is well to bring this institution, its workings, designs and scope, prominently before the Legislature and the people, that its merits may be known, its faults and abuses, if it have them, corrected, and its needs and necessities fully appreciated. We believe that if such should be the case, the college will grow in public favor, and increase in efficiency.

We may reasonably hope that if the State shall give the institution the support that its importance would justify, and thus make it one of influence and power, that it may attract the attention of some of those of abundant wealth and large hearts, who desire to make their charities perpetual, and so become the recipient of bounties similar to those that other institutions of the kind have

received. There may be at present, or at a future time, some Ezra Cornell among us, who may be moved to assist the brave spirits who are struggling with poverty there, and at once put the institution on a footing as firm and prosperous as is that at Ithica. Such charities are not attracted to institutions of feeble and languishing existence, but rather to those that seem to have a long and strong life tenure, by their hold on the hearts of the people.

SAMUEL WASSON, }
IVORY LORD, } *Committee.*

AUGUSTA, Jan. 15, 1875.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
January 20, 1875. }

On motion of Mr. ROGERS of Windham, ordered printed.

S. J. CHADBOURNE, *Clerk.*