

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIFTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE.

HOUSE.

No. 128.

STATE OF MAINE.

RESOLVE for the improvement in the condition and
punishment of female prisoners.

Resolved, That the governor and council are hereby
2 requested to make enquiries into the subject pre-
3 sented in the memorial of Mrs. Ellen M. Taylor
4 of Portland, and ascertain what measures can be
5 adopted by which the result sought for can be ob-
6 tained, and report such facts and information to
7 the next legislature.

MEMORIAL.

To the Senate and House of Representatives assembled in
Legislature at Augusta, Maine.

Gentlemen:—With deference we call your attention to a desired improvement in the system of punishment affecting the women of the jails and the prison of this Commonwealth; to the propriety and necessity of separate confinement for them, under the supervision, so far as may be, of officers of their own sex.

The experiment would not be a novel one, since in England and the neighboring State of Massachusetts the success of such jurisdiction and superintendency is assured. The policy commends itself upon general principles, but to those who are acquainted with the condition of these women the facts bear out the necessity of an appeal of this sort. Under the present arrangement communication with male convicts is not always impossible even in a model prison or jail, and without reference to actual abuses, no adequate discipline nor reform of these women is practicable under existing circumstances; and these whom the cities and State hold in custody should admonish after some better fashion the lawless ones outside who are drifting thitherward. Something more than the mere principle of restraint distinguishes our legislation and the official administration and care of prisoners of the other sex; but these unfortunate or wicked women have been left too much to themselves, or to a poorly suited system of management, of which the perversity of some could take wretched advantage, and the helplessness of others make only mute and vain appeal in their revolt against it.

The company is not a large one to which your attention is called, not numbering at the present time more than sixty

women, though there are some beside in houses of correction whom it would better pay to keep under a wise and kind restraint with longer sentences, which a suitable prison with a reformatory system might make feasible. The fact that there is not an overwhelming number encourages the experiment. A simple and inexpensive but humane provision could be made for them before the proportions and complications which embarrass this work in other places shall have time to mature. All the conditions which are noted among greater aggregations of vice and crime are present with us, and the same moral necessity and principle of legislative economy point to the wisdom and expediency of some move in this direction, and your petitioners pray that the women incarcerated in the jails and the prison of this State may be brought together into some place already available, or to be prepared for them, to be officered and cared for so far as may be by their own sex, to the credit of the intelligence and moral standard of our people, and their distinction in legislative science and practical wisdom and philanthropy.

Ellen M. Taylor, Sarah W. Devoll, Thomas Hill, Joshua L. Chamberlain, W. W. Thomas, E. W. G. Thomas, S. Perham, Sarah L. S. McCobb, Mary S. McCobb, H. W. Richardson, Edward H. Elwell, Fred N. Dow, L. M. N. Stevens, Hannah T. Fenn, Margaret T. W. Merrill, Israel Washburn, Jr., Robina N. Washburn, Lot M. Morrill, Helen A. Gilman, Caroline D. D. Rand, Alice W. Bradbury, A. J. Davis, Helen C. M. Loring, Maria A. Jose, William Henry Clifford, Charles E. Clifford, W. H. Hobbs, Edward Gould, William Senter, C. W. Goddard, M. M. Butler.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
February 13, 1879. }

Reported from the Committee on Legal Affairs, by Mr. INGRAHAM of Portland, and ordered printed, with memorial, under the Joint Rule.

B. L. STAPLES, *Clerk.*