

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIFTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE.

SENATE.

No. 67.

*To the Honorable Senate and House of
Representatives in Legislature assembled:*

The Joint Standing Committee on State Prison, to whom was referred the report of the Inspectors, Warden, Physician, Instructor and Clergymen of the Maine State Prison, have had the same under consideration, and have recommended an appropriation of \$12,000 to be applied toward liquidating the indebtedness of the prison. It was considered by the Committee that enough can be realized on the sales of stock on hand and by a vigorous collection of notes and bills due the prison to pay the running expenses for the ensuing year. One great draw-back in the financial management of the prison for the past, is the fact that stock on hand and in the several stages of construction, has continually depreciated in value during the time it has remained in the prison, and before sales could be made. As prices of almost every kind of commodity have now been reduced to hard pan, it is believed that no large deficiency will occur in the future.

Your Committee found on its visit, two hundred and twenty-eight prisoners, a number having been admitted since the prison report came out. The prison was found to be in excellent condition, so far as cleanliness and sanitary measures are concerned; and the very low rate of mortality among convicts, as shown by the prison report, proves conclusively that great pains have been taken to ensure a state of healthfulness,—a thing to be desired even within the limits of a penitentiary. We found the discipline of the prison all that could be desired, the prisoners seeming to realize the utter impossibility of an escape from an institution so complete in all its appointments and so thoroughly guarded.

As the order of the Legislature authorizing our visit did not direct a critical inspection of the books and papers of the institution, the Committee only examined such books, papers, vouchers, notes and bills, as our limited time permitted. The examination, as made, was very satisfactory to the Committee, giving us the impression that the financial affairs of the institution are conducted in a careful and business-like manner. For a detailed statement of the financial condition of the institution, the Committee can only refer members to the report of the Inspectors and Warden for the year 1878.

A great good is being done in the prison by way of teaching such prisoners who are destitute of an education, to read and write, and also in giving instruction in other branches. It is a well known fact that ignorance, combined with vice, brings hundreds within prison walls; and we consider that any reasonable outlay to educate the convicts and raise them to a higher degree of intelligence, thereby giving them a step forward in morality, will not only be a great blessing to the prisoners themselves, but will be a great saving to, and money well expended by, the State.

The majority of the prisoners take great delight in reading such books and papers as they from time to time obtain from the limited supply kept on hand at the prison. The Committee recommend that the Legislature appropriate a sufficient sum each year to enable those in charge to keep the shelves of the prison library well stocked with good reading matter, for we firmly believe that the State can well afford to take all reasonable measures to educate and enlighten those of our fellow citizens who have been so unfortunate as to fall into habits of vice and crime.

Respectfully submitted.

JAMES MORRISON, JR.,
J. F. FERGUSON,
M. W. STILES,
G. D. LAUGHTON,
JOHN R. HURD,
EBEN WOODBURY,
J. P. RIGBY,
HOWARD STAPLES,

} *Joint Standing
Committee on
State Prison.*

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, February 17, 1879.

Reported by Mr. MORRISON of Franklin, from the Committee
on State Prison, and on his motion laid over to be printed.

SAMUEL W. LANE, *Secretary.*