

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE.

1865.

AUGUSTA:

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1865.

FORTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE.

SENATE.

No. 29.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON THE STATE REFORM SCHOOL.

The Joint Standing Committee on the State Reform School, having visited that institution in compliance with an order of the Legislature, ask leave to

REPORT:

That they left Augusta, Thursday, Feb. 2d, and spent part of that and the following day with the intervening night at the school, thus being enabled to observe the workings of the institution in the ordinary routine of its various departments, to see how each hour was occupied, and the manner in which the labor and instruction were conducted, the amount and kind of recreation allowed, as well as the necessary arrangements for cooking and eating, washing and sleeping.

With the printed reports of the Trustees and Superintendent of the School already on the desks of the members of the Legislature, exhibiting in numerous tables all the statistics of the institution, it will not be expected of your Committee to go over the same ground in detail.

It is assumed that the objects contemplated in these legislative reviews of our State charitable and penal institutions, are mainly for the purpose of ascertaining if the funds entrusted to, and the duties imposed upon, the boards of management, are wisely expended, and efficiently performed; and in the case before us, although it is impossible in the brief hours of a single day to give an

exhausting examination of the workings of the school for the entire year, yet your committee have no hesitation in saying that this institution is accomplishing a vast amount of good, and the State could ill afford to dispense with its beneficial and elevating influences, even at a cost much larger than the present expense which it must be acknowledged is somewhat onerous.

The early morning and later evening hours are devoted to the schools, which are kept in two rooms. Miss Scamman has charge of the primary department, and the more advanced scholars are under the direction of Mr. Berry, with the assistance of Miss Chase, who uses the library for a recitation room. In both departments the order was excellent, and the scholars appear to have made most satisfactory progress in their studies. Doubtless this is owing largely to the absolute control which the teachers have over their pupils out of as well as in school hours; and one who has ever had charge of an ordinary school, and been subjected to the annoyances of tardiness and truancy or absence for trivial causes, might envy a teacher who has no such troubles. The Library has on its shelves a good variety of attractive literature, and your Committee are glad to learn that the opportunity of reading is highly appreciated by the boys, and the loss of this privilege is one of the punishments most severely felt.

The hours of the middle of the day, except the time allowed for meals and recreation, are occupied in the shops. A visit to these affords the most interesting spectacle connected with the institution. In the sewing room, the younger boys were sewing and knitting, some of them with a facility which seemed quite wonderful, and they appeared to enjoy their work. The chair room is crowded with a band of busy workers, braiding cane seats for a firm in Portland, doing their work well and with great rapidity, and in the shoe shop the older boys were sitting upon their benches and bottoming bright colored shoes with apparent skill and industry. Considerable sums are earned in these ways to reduce the expenses of the school, but aside from this the advantages gained by the boys from this discipline of regular labor are not among the least of the benefits conferred by the institution. They did not appear at all listless in their work, and there was an aspect of cheerful and productive industry which was very pleasant. Beside these, a number of boys are employed in the cooking and washing departments, in tending the fires, and taking care of the

stock and farm. Further than a brief visit to the spacious barn, and an examination of the stock* collected there, the rigors of a midwinter day, with the thermometer below zero, forbade out of door excursions, and an examination of the large farm, and the extensive brick kiln, which is the most lucrative branch of the institution, can only be made to advantage in summer.

At their meals the boys are allowed all they can eat of a very simple diet. To your Committee, fresh from the larders of the Augusta House and other noted tables of the capital, it seemed rather plain, and did not the healthy countenances of the boys and their unexampled immunity from sickness prove to the contrary, they would hardly believe it sufficient for sound health. Most certainly the Trustees are guilty of no extravagance in that direction.

It was pleasant to notice how at the times set apart for recreation they were allowed to run and jump and push and give deafening shouts in the way which always seems to do boys so much good, and to observe how readily at a signal from the teacher they would become quiet and resume their studies or work.

In the evening all the boys were assembled in the large school room for a judicial settlement of the day's offences against the rules of the institution. They were called before the Superintendent one after another, and the penalty announced in each case of delinquency. These consisted usually in loss of grade, which carried with it the loss of some special privilege, and it was found that any boy when called upon could tell his exact rank and position, thus showing that it was a matter in which all felt a deep interest, that the grading system was an effective one, and that the boys appreciated the privileges to be gained by good conduct.

At the close of the settling hour, the boys removed their shoes and stockings before leaving the school room, took them in their hands, and at a given signal pattered off up the winding stairs like a parcel of bees, darted into their little cells, and in a few moments were snugly stowed away in their narrow beds, and the great bars let down which fastened them in for the night. Their well ventilated apartments opened into the great hall, which your Committee

* Some of the members of the Committee, who have investigated the qualities of different breeds of cattle, are of the opinion that the Devon is not the most profitable stock for such a farm, and that by the substitution of some breed which produces better milkers, more variety might be given to the simple diet of the boys.

found about the temperature of out of doors. Here is doubtless another cause of their sound health, for but one boy was found of the whole 188 who was at all sick, and the Committee learned that during the past year there had been no occasion for the services of a physician.

Finally your Committee are of the unanimous opinion that the State Reform School is entitled to the fostering care of the Legislature, and it is hoped that although the sums required for its maintenance may seem large, they will be freely appropriated, for your Committee would consider the adoption of any course which would cripple the operations of this beneficent institution as a serious public calamity.

By the report of the Superintendent it appears that the cost of sustaining the Reform School for the year just closing is about \$18,000, an excess of \$4,000 above the regular appropriation. Your Committee respectfully recommend an appropriation to cover this deficiency.

The Trustees estimate the next year's expenses at \$17,200. Your Committee recommend that an appropriation of \$16,000 be granted, hoping that although this amount is less by \$1200 than the Trustees estimates, and \$2,000 short of last year's expenses, it may yet with prudent management be found sufficient for the purpose.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

E. H. BANKS,
A. D. MANSON,
S. H. TALBOT,
W. H. KILBY,
JOHN D. HOPKINS,
JOHN H. SAYWARD,
ASA F. HUTCHINSON.

STATE OF MAINE.

RESOLVE in favor of the state reform school.

Resolved, That the sum of four thousand dollars be
2 and is hereby appropriated to supply the deficiency in
3 the appropriation for the support of the state reform
4 school, for the fiscal year ending March thirty-first,
5 one thousand eight hundred sixty-five.

STATE OF MAINE.

RESOLVE in favor of the state reform school.

Resolved, That the sum of sixteen thousand dollars
2 be and is hereby appropriated for the support of the
3 reform school for the financial year ending April first,
4 in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred
5 sixty-six, and no further sum shall be drawn from the
6 treasury therefor during the said year.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, February 17, 1865.

Laid on the table on motion of Mr. BANKS, and 350 copies of the Report, and Resolves accompanying, ordered to be printed for the use of the Legislature.

THOMAS P. CLEAVES, *Secretary.*