

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

October 21, 1826

Ordered to lie, and that 500 Copies be printed for the use of the House.

GEO. H. BIGELOW, Assist. Clerk.

REPORT.

TO THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF VERMONT:

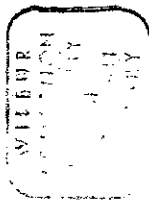
A resolution was adopted by the Legislature, at their last session, of which the following is a copy:

"Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives, that the Governor be requested to appoint some suitable person, who, under the advice of the Governor, shall visit some of the institutions in other States, for the reformation of Juvenile Offenders, and obtain all such information on the subject as he shall be enabled to do, and report to the Legislature, at the next session, such facts as he may judge material, together with a bill providing for such an institution in this State."

Having been appointed by Governor Fletcher to perform the service required by said resolution, I respectfully report, that, in January last, I visited some of the Reform Schools in Massachusetts, and devoted as much time to their examination, and to the obtaining of reliable information in relation thereto, as I deemed necessary, with reference to the object of the Legislature in causing the examination to be made.

The House of Reformation, in Boston, was established in the year 1826. The cost of its grounds and buildings was \$75,000—and the expenses of maintaining it are paid from the City Treasury. At the time of my visit, there were over two hundred boys in the school, most of whom were orphans, or the children of parents whose characters, habits and in-

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fluence, were such as to render the condition of their children worse than that of orphans.

These children were gathered from the streets of Boston and placed in the House of Reformation, prevent their growing up in idleness and crime.

Their education is intellectual and moral, and the design of the managers of the school is to keep the boys there, under its beneficial influence, until they shall have acquired sufficient knowledge to perform the common business of life.

Corporal punishment is discountenanced in this school, other modes, more humane, and more beneficial, in the estimation of its managers, are resorted to.

The State Reform School, at Westboro', Massachusetts, is the largest school, of its class, in New England. It was established in 1848, and has been in successful operation from that time to the present. The buildings, and yards attached, occupy one and three-fourths acres of land, and, complete therewith, is a large farm, in the cultivation of which many of the boys are employed portions of the time.

The cost of this establishment was over \$130,000,—more than half of which was paid by the State, and the balance from individual donations.

It is under the management of seven trustees, appointed by the Governor and Council. At the time of my visit to this school, there were over six hundred boys therein, placed there by the sentence of the courts of the State.

From December 1, 1856, to October 1, 1857, a period of ten months, 229 boys were committed;—of this number, 110 for stubbornness, 70 for larceny, 14 idle and disorderly, 8 for vagrancy, 5 for shop-breaking, 4 for malicious mischief, 3 for assault, 2 for assault and battery, 2 common drunkards, and 11 for other misdemeanors. One hundred and fifty-five of these were sentenced for the term of during their minority, and the remainder for various periods, from one to ten years.

ough most of them from one year to three years. Of the number thus sentenced during the ten months, the youngest was seven and the oldest seventeen years old, and the average of all is thirteen years. One hundred and seventy-two of this number were born in the United States, and fifty-seven in foreign countries.

There have been committed to this institution, from the time of its organization to the first of December, 1857, 2,138 boys, of whom 442 were born in foreign countries and 1,696 in the United States; and of those born in the United States, 1,659 were of American parentage, 441 of Irish, 57 of English, 14 of Scotch, 13 of French, 9 of German, and three of other countries, which shows conclusively that vicious tendencies are far from being confined to children of foreign birth or parentage.

The time of the inmates of this school is appropriated as follows:—six hours of the twenty-four, to labor, four and one-half hours to school, one and one-fourth hours to meals, one and one-half hours to sleep, and two and three-fourths hours to recreation. During the hours devoted to labor the boys are employed variously; some in farming and gardening, others in shoe-making, sewing, making cane seats for chairs, &c., &c. All the shoes and clothing of the boys are made by themselves, and many articles of their manufacture are sold.

METHOD OF DISCIPLINE:

Moral suasion, chiefly; granting special recreation for industry and good conduct. For misdemeanors, resorting to change of diet, solitary confinement and corporal punishment, the latter only resorted to in extreme cases.

EDUCATION.

Instruction, of a thorough character, in reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, physiology, grammar, algebra, and singing, with due attention to their physical, moral and religious development.

in the same chapel, and take their meals at the same table.—This system has its advantages, probably, with reference to expense, if the inmates are to be kept in the school for any great length of time; but its disadvantages are apparent to all who are acquainted with the effects of association upon the individuals associated together.

It must be borne in mind that the youth, who are brought under the good influences of these reformatory schools, are not gathered from the best material in society, but, on the contrary, from among those, who, in most instances, were born into the most unfavorable conditions, and of parents whose influence must be injurious to the proper development of their offspring. Indeed many parents are so low, degraded, and undeveloped, that they can transmit to their children, only such passions, propensities and desires as they themselves possess, for, truth it is, that we do transmit to our children our characters. If we have no worldly wealth for them to inherit, they will inherit in a greater or less degree, our vices, as well as our better qualities.

"Many youths are so unfavorably constituted by nature, and have such innate activity of the lower propensities, with such feebleness of the moral sentiments, that, in whatever circumstances they may be placed, they will grow up to be vicious and depraved men. The sins of their fathers are visited upon them.

"Like must produce like," and the consequence of a depraved organism of the parent must be a similar depravity in the child. This class require a different treatment and discipline from those more favored and less inclined to immorality and wickedness, but who have become vicious, not from a naturally strong predisposition to vice, but from the conditions and surroundings of their childhood and youth. If these have been unfavorable, they fall gradually into vicious practices, and, if unarrested in their course, they will, sooner or later, in most cases, become criminals, preying upon community; and, to guard society against

their crimes, severe measures will be required, not to reform them, for that may become impossible, but to keep them within the walls of the prison, that society may be safe from their depredations.

Facts, connected with the history of juvenile offenders, prove that most of them come from that class who have been deprived of good homes and kindly influences, and, as a consequence, are most exposed to want and temptation. From this great class the subjects for Houses of Reformation are mostly drawn, though many of the naturally more vicious and depraved are found within their walls. The effect of congregating the two classes together cannot be otherwise than injurious. Those whose vicious tendencies are too strong to be suppressed, except by a long course of discipline and care, should be separated from the less depraved, for the former radiate and diffuse, involuntarily perhaps, vice and evil around them, which has a most unfavorable influence upon the better inclined, whose moral power is too weak to resist that influence.

At Westboro' I was shown a work-shop wholly detached from all other rooms in the building, which was constructed for those whose influence was decidedly injurious to the better disposed boys. The Superintendent informed me that the boys, when in school, or at work, were not allowed to converse with each other, and yet the evil influence of the more vicious and depraved was great upon those by whom they were surrounded. He remarked that "a magnetism went out from them, which seemed to influence and contaminate those who were desirous of profiting by the teaching and discipline of the school." Hence the necessity of separating the two classes.

An evil is found to exist from congregating and continuing together, for any great length of time, a large number of persons of one sex, particularly the young, who, from unfavorable conditions, have fallen into vicious ways and evil habits. Such a state is unnatural, unfavorable to the growth of the social virtues

and graces, and injurious to the moral nature in a greater or less degree. Young persons, with good dispositions and good intentions, need the constant presence, influence and example of their elders. In common families and general society, the young and middle-aged are mingled together in due proportion, and any wide departure from this natural order must be unfavorable to the best moral growth. If this be true of the better part of our youth, the application of this truth to those who are fit subjects of a Reform School can be made with peculiar force, for "VICIOUSLY DISPOSED YOUTH SHOULD NOT BE BROUGHT TOGETHER, BUT PUT AS FAR ASUNDER," as may be practicable.

The evils of the congregated system are felt and acknowledged by those who have been long engaged in the reformatory movements of the past, and efforts have been, and are now being made, to separate the inmates of these schools into small classes and families.

The State Industrial School for Girls, at Lancaster, Mass., was established upon this plan, and has been in operation since July, 1856, not long enough to form an accurate judgment of its peculiar advantages, yet the report of the Trustees, Superintendent and Chaplain of that school, made September 30, 1857, is highly encouraging and satisfactory.

Instead of constructing a large building for the inmates of the school, four or five houses, in form and appearance like ordinary dwelling houses, were built, each designed to accommodate a family of thirty persons, and the girls in the school are divided into families, and occupy, with the matrons and teachers, the several dwellings, the object being to combine the comforts of a family and a home, and to divest these homes of every thing, so far as possible, that would give them the character or appearance of prisons or penitentiaries.

Having thus endeavored to embody such facts and information as seemed to be required by the resolution under which I have acted, and having prepared a bill, as required by the resolution,

trust that it will not be deemed improper for me to submit to the Legislature my views in relation to what is required for the reformation of the juvenile offenders of our State, derived from the facts that I have learned, and the consideration I have given to the subject.

I have not the means of stating the number of these offenders. To do so would require not only an examination of the records of our County Courts,—but also of the Justices of the Peace throughout the State, a labor which the resolution did not seem to warrant. That there is a sufficient number who ought to be removed from the temptations by which they are surrounded, and placed under the influence of reformatory measures, may be inferred from the fact that the subject has been repeatedly considered by former Legislatures, resulting in the adoption of the resolution, under which I have acted in collecting the facts above set forth.

My own observation satisfies me that the time has arrived when Vermont should establish a reformatory school. Although the records of our Courts, if examined, might not show so large a number of juvenile offenders as would seem to require or justify a large expenditure in providing for their care and reformation, still they would show, I am confident, that something should be done, and that a beginning should be made. But the records of our Courts would come far short of showing the whole number of juvenile offenders, although they would show that the greater number of those sentenced to the common Jails and State Prison are mere youths, or very young persons. How often have appeals been made to our Courts, in behalf of young offenders, on the ground of their youth; the fact that they are orphans, or the children of parents whose influence upon them has been unfavorable or injurious; and the further appeal, to save them from the Jail or State Prison, where they would be confined with old offenders, whose influence upon them would be such, that, when discharged, they would come out more hardened

and depraved than they were when convicted! And have not these appeals resulted frequently in the discharge of the offender upon his own, or his parent's, recognizance to keep the peace, or to appear and answer at a future term of the Court, or in the infliction of a small fine, and thus sending him back to the same temptations and evil influences that surrounded him before? Often, too, these reasons for not sending a child to Jail or the State Prison have operated to prevent any prosecution whatever for minor offenses. But, as the descent in crime is rapid, the minor offense unpunished, leads to a still greater one, and soon the young offender, who might have been saved, had we a reform school to place him in, becomes hardened in crime, and he finds his home at last in the State Prison.

It would be cheaper to *prevent* crime than to *punish* it. The expense of our Judiciary is large and has greatly increased within the last few years, and the cost of trying and punishing offenders is of such magnitude that we may well seek to rid ourselves of it, with reference to economy alone. But when we consider the worth of the immortal souls of the young, who are exposed by want and suffering, from the neglect of friends, or the incompetency of parents to shield them from temptation and guide them in the paths of industry and morality, the subject should not be looked upon from the dollar-and-cent stand-point, but from a higher and nobler one. Believing that all men are the children of the great Heavenly Parent, these unfortunate, tempted, weak children should be regarded as *our brothers, our sisters*. They are the children of the State, and some of them, with proper culture, may become her brightest jewels. Should not the State take care of them in their weakness, protect them from the evils by which they are surrounded, and seek to elevate them to a higher and better condition? It seems that there can be but one answer to this question. **THE STATE SHOULD DO IT. How shall it be done?**

Happily for us, our State is an inland one, and we have no large towns or cities where the vicious do congregate in large numbers. Still the facilities for travelling are such that we are brought into much more intimate connection with the large cities of neighboring States than we were before our railroads were constructed. These facilities bring to us many advantages, pecuniary and social, while, at the same time, we are affected in a greater or less degree, by the vices and evils which abound in those cities; therefore, greater watchfulness and care become necessary in guiding the young, who will soon fill our places in society.

My plan, in the establishment of such a school as we need, would be to secure to the State a small farm, in a pleasant, healthy spot, where an abundance of pure water may flow so, and over, if need be, the buildings erected upon it. Erect so houses upon it, of proper dimensions, sufficiently remote from each other to keep the boys and girls separate. I would erect large buildings, nor make the establishment an extensive one. Appoint suitable persons to have charge of the buildings and their inmates. They should be men and women well fitted by nature and education for their positions; firm, just, sympathetic and benevolent. The inmates there received should be kept only long enough to learn their dispositions and the kind of treatment they require, with reference to their reform, and, this ascertained, places fitted to their necessities and condition should be found for them among the many good homes that abound everywhere upon our hill-sides and in our valleys. This may be deemed difficult, but let it be tried before it is condemned.

If such a place cannot be found without paying therefor, then pay a suitable consideration. From twenty-five to fifty dollars per annum, for a year or two, would be less expensive to the State than the maintenance of a child would be in the school or in a prison. A child thus placed in a good fam-

ly, surrounded by healthy moral and religious influence would, in all probability, be reformed. The officers of school should seek, at all times, proper (not improper) plans for binding out the children, and should have an oversight of them after they leave the school, and see that they are properly cared for and brought up, according to the spirit and intent of the contract between the parties. In thus providing for the reformation of juvenile offenders, the great outlay required for large buildings would be avoided, and but comparatively a small number of children would be kept in school, and the evils arising from a large number being congregated and living together would be avoided. The wandering and erring child would be placed where he would be surrounded by the healthy influences of a good family and where, perhaps, he never found before, a good home; and the homes would become THE TRUE REFORMATORY SCHOOLS OF THE STATE.

I cannot conclude this report without expressing my thanks to Doct. S. G. Howe, of Boston, a gentleman who has devoted a great portion of his life to the benevolent and reformatory movements of the age, for valuable information and suggestions relating to the subject committed to my charge; John A. Fayerweather, resident trustee of the School at Woburn, — to James A. Talcott, Superintendent, and the Rev. Wm. T. Sleeper, Chaplain of that institution, and to other officers thereof, for affording me every facility in their power collecting the facts which I have embodied in this report.

All which is respectfully submitted.

WM. WESTON.

Burlington, Oct. 18th,