

FIRST REPORT

(for 1844)

OF

The Female Department

OF THE

PRISON ASSOCIATION

OF

NEW YORK.

NEW YORK:

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1845.

New York Prison Association.

It is only within a few years that those who have been cut off from society for their misdeeds, have been deemed worthy of attention. They have been given over to the law and its ministers, and forgotten; as completely banished from the sympathies and cut off from the efforts of the benevolent, as if *natural* death had been included in the *civil* death which was pronounced upon them from the Judge's bench. The community has been even more severe than the law; for the inflictions of the latter cease when the allotted term of punishment has expired, while the former continues to pursue him who has paid the penalty, with a contempt and abhorrence which would of themselves be heavy punishment for many offences.

We rejoice that this vindictive and unfeeling spirit is less general than formerly. We are happy to know there are now many who believe that one human being should never pronounce another hopeless, irreclaimable—the proper object only of painful inflictions and continued deprivation. It is to this class that we venture to address ourselves, hoping to arouse an attention and interest that will never sleep, until the great objects to which our efforts are directed are accomplished, and that on a scale commensurate with the almost boundless extent of the work before us.

We are well aware that the work of reformation and restoration, at which we aim, cannot be accomplished without sacrifice and self-denial on the part of those who feel its importance and acknowledge its claims. It will not avail, to say to the objects of our care, "Be ye warmed and clothed or fed," if we neglect the several necessities which are so much more pressing than their physical wants. In the case of very many female convicts, the heart has been crushed, the affections chilled, and the sensibilities destroyed, by a long course of neglect, unkindness or oppression which might drive a wise man mad. Helpless, homeless, friendless, alive only to a burning sense of wrong, and reckless of consequences, these unfortunates fall before temptations, and commit crimes which they must expiate by years of hard labor and solitary confinement. When they come forth again into the world (penitent it may be and earnestly desirous to do right,) they yearn for human sympathy and human kindness. They need to be warmed into life by the contact

of heart with heart, before they can be expected to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Where can this be done so well as in the family circle? Even if it were possible to build asylums large enough to contain them all, it would not be desirable to keep them there, for the very isolation and singularity of their condition would be unfavorable to their improvement. They need to share in the hallowed influences, the salutary restraints, the joys and sorrows of a well ordered Christian home. Hitherto, every avenue to respectable and honorable employment has been shut against discharged convicts, so that multitudes of them have found their way back within the walls of a prison, literally as a place of refuge from utter destitution and starvation. These things ought not so to be. As the professed disciples of Him who said of his mission to earth—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost;" we are bound to welcome back the repenting wanderer, and by every proper means, to strengthen her good resolutions, and awaken the latent principle of self respect. But how shall this be done?—Christian Sisters, in the city and country, we appeal to you, to aid us in answering this important question, by your counsel, your prayers, and your alms. Aid us, we entreat you, in providing employment for the truly penitent and deserving; and if, in doing so, it shall seem to you as it does to us, that in particular cases it may be duty to take these children of misfortune into our own families as domestics—shrink not from the path of duty, however trying it may appear.

There are, and have always been, among the female convicts at Sing-Sing, some who give satisfactory evidence of real repentance and reformation, and who, at the expiration of their term of confinement, would be glad to go out to service in the country, for very moderate wages, if they might but be sure of kind treatment and a good home. It is, for obvious reasons, far better for such to be in the country than in this great thoroughfare of temptation and crime. Where are the benevolent individuals, who from love to souls, will consent thus to receive an erring fellow-creature, bear patiently with her deficiencies, instruct, counsel, and watch over her, as they who must give account? There can be no doubt, that in most cases, such benevolence would reap a present reward, in the gratitude and faithful service of the party obliged; and in the sweet consciousness of having been instrumental in restoring a repenting sinner to herself, to society, and to God.

It is now nearly three months since the Board of Inspectors of the State Prison at Sing-Sing thought proper to invite the attention of the benevolent to the destitute condition of discharged convicts; stating, as the result of their opportunities for observation, that though prisoners frequently afford satisfactory evidence of sincere repentance, and earnest desires to reform, yet, when they go forth into the world, they are often, for want of employment, reduced to great distress, and subject to sore temptations. To starve or steal is often the only alternative presented to them.

Believing that very many could be saved from a return to their former evil practices by timely aid—that not a few might be retained in the path of reform by encouragement and support judiciously applied, the Inspectors took measures to call a public meeting of the citizens of New York, for the purpose of forming a Society similar to those which exist in many parts of Europe, having mainly in view three things; viz:

1. The amelioration of the condition of prisoners, whether detained for trial or finally convicted.
2. The improvement of Prison discipline generally; and,
3. The relief of discharged convicts, by affording them the means of obtaining an honest livelihood.

The call was made in the names of the following gentlemen:

THEO. FRELINGHUYSEN,	B. F. BUTLER,
W. T. MCCOON,	JAMES HARPER,
SAMUEL JONES,	DANIEL LORD, JR.,
ELEAZER FARMLY,	ISAAC T. HOPPER,
GARDINER SPRING,	M. ULSHOEFFER,
WILLIAM KENT,	LEWIS H. SANDFORD,
W. B. LAWRENCE,	JOHN W. EDMONDS,
R. H. MORRIS,	WM. H. CHANNING,
JOHN JAY,	ODESS HOFFMAN,
A. VANDERPOEL,	M. C. PATTERSON,
W. C. BRYANT,	RICHARD J. THORN,
THOS. J. OAKLEY,	HORACE GREENEY,
CHAS. W. SANDFORD,	THEO. SEDGWICK,
W. WALN DRINKER,	HENRY MERRITT,
JOE HASKELL,	J. L. TELLKAMPF,
FREEMAN HUNT,	THEO. A. TELLKAMPF,
SAML. R. BETTS,	ZEB. COOKE, JR.
ROBT. B. MINTURN,	JOS. B. COLLINS,
HENRY GRINNELL,	DAVID AUSTIN,
EDMOND L. BENZON,	WM. C. RUSSELL,
CHARLES M. LEUPP,	DAVID HALE,
ABRAHAM VAN NEST,	N. PEARCE,
CHARLES P. DALY,	LEWIS P. W. BALCH,
HENRY W. BELLOWES,	JOHN A. DIX,
ORVILLE DEVEY,	PROSPER M. WETMORE,
JONA. M. WAINWRIGHT,	JOHN T. IRVING,
JOHN HUGHES,	EDWARD S. GOULD,
JAMES MILNOR,	JACOB HARVEY,
HENRY ANTHON,	WILLIAM JONES,
D. P. INGRAHAM,	JAS. R. WHITING.
F. A. TALLMADGE,	

A large and highly respectable meeting consequent upon this call, took place at the Apollo Rooms, on the evening of the 8th of December. Several addresses were made setting forth the objects of the undertaking, and many examples cited to prove that even among criminals the universal law of kindness is all-powerful, and

that thousands of re-commitments might be spared if there were some benevolent aid always at hand, to encourage those, who, having been subjected to good influences in prison, are sincerely desirous of returning to virtue, yet at present are driven almost inevitably back to vice.

The Society was then organized and the following Constitution adopted :

CONSTITUTION.

ART. I. This Society shall be known as the Prison Association of New York.

ART. II. Its objects shall be—

1. The amelioration of the condition of prisoners whether detained for trial or finally convicted, or as witnesses.
2. The improvement of Prison Discipline and the government of prisons, whether for cities, counties or States.
3. The support and encouragement of reformed convicts after their discharge by affording them the means of obtaining an honest livelihood and sustaining them in their efforts at reform.

ART. III. The officers of the Society shall be a President, four Vice Presidents, a Recording Secretary, a Corresponding Secretary, a Treasurer, and the following committee, viz. : a Finance Committee, a Committee on Detentions, a Committee on Discipline, and a Committee on Discharged Convicts.

ART. IV. The officers named in the preceding article shall constitute an Executive Committee, who shall choose one of their number to be Chairman thereof, and any five of their number shall constitute a quorum.

ART. V. The Executive Committee shall meet once in each month and keep regular minutes of their proceedings. They shall have a general superintendence and direction of the affairs of the Society, and shall annually report to the Society all their proceedings, and such other matters as shall be likely to advance the ends of the association.

ART. VI. The Society shall meet annually in the city of New York, at such time and place as the Executive Committee shall appoint, and at such other times as the President, or, in his absence, one of the Vice Presidents, shall designate.

ART. VII. Any person contributing \$2 per year shall, during such contribution, be a member of the Society. A contribution of \$25 shall constitute a member for life.

ART. VIII. A female department shall be formed, consisting of such females as shall take an interest in the objects of the Society; who may select their own Executive Committee, and have particularly in their charge the interests and welfare of prisoners of their sex.

ART. IX. The officers of the Association shall be chosen annu-

ally at the annual meeting, at which time such persons may be elected honorary members as shall have rendered essential service to the cause of Prison Discipline.

ART. X. Any Society having the same objects in view, may become auxiliary to this Association, by contributing to its funds and co-operating with it.

ART. XI. The Executive Committee shall have power to add to any of the Standing Committees, such persons as in their opinion may be likely to promote the objects of the Society.

ART. XII. This Constitution may be amended by a vote of the majority of the society at any meeting thereof, provided notice of the amendment has been given at the next preceding meeting.

The objects of the association are stated to be these :—

“1st. To have in view the conditions of persons arrested and detained in prison on suspicion or charge of crime, so far as to secure to the destitute and friendless, strict justice in their cases, and to protect them from the deprivations of unprincipled or unfaithful persons with whom they may come in contact.

2nd. To attend to the subject of prison discipline generally, including herein the government and conduct of State, County, and City Prisons—to obtain statistics of crime—to extend the influence of the American plan, and by disseminating information, procure its general adoption—and more particularly to enlarge the reformatory influence of our Penitentiary system.

3d. And principally, to aid discharged prisoners in their efforts at leading honest lives. Besides the large numbers of suspected or convicted criminals, who are constantly returned upon this city, from our City Prison, the Penitentiary on Blackwell's Island, and the House of Refuge for Juvenile Delinquents—the precise amount of which, the association have not yet been able to learn—it has been ascertained that from 20 to 25 convicts are discharged every month from the State Prison at Sing-Sing, who, with hardly an exception, come directly to this city. More than half of this number having been originally sent up from this city and Brooklyn, return to those places as their only home, and very many of the residue, having no other home, remain here. To prevent those persons from continuing their deprivations upon this community, it is intended that a strict scrutiny shall be had into their characters, and their conduct while in prison : and as to those who afford no hopes of reformation, to report their names to the officers of justice, so that they shall be closely watched. As to the others, to aid them in their efforts at reformation, by procuring employment for them and encouraging them to lead honest lives, and sin no more.

Very many of this class are frequently driven to return to a course of crime by sheer want, and their inability to procure employment. To guard against this result, is very evidently a matter of interest to all of our citizens. To accomplish this end it is pro-

posed mainly, to find work for the discharged convict, but not to advance him money, unless it be for the purchase of tools or the necessaries of life. That to be done rather by advancing articles in kind than money. And in all cases, the sums thus advanced to be regarded as loans, to be repaid to the Association out of the proceeds of his labor—thus not only encouraging in him habits of economy and industry, but inciting him to increased exertions, by the reflection that by every dollar he returns he is contributing his aid to others in like condition, by enabling the Association to use the same sums many times."

These remarks, as to the difficulties and dangers besetting the released convict, apply with peculiar force to the *females* who are daily discharged from the various prisons of the city and its vicinity. The Penitentiary at Blackwell's Island alone, offers a field of action almost boundless. Of its hundreds of inmates, *five-eighths* are women, destitute and degraded, but not invariably hopeless; and these are constantly returning among us to become still more degraded, and, in many cases, irrevocably brutalized, by successive re-commitments.

Under the eighth article of the Constitution of the Association, which provides for the formation of a Female Department, a number of ladies interested in the objects proposed, assembled at Mr. Isaac T. Hopper's, and named ten of their number a Committee of arrangements, to provide for the proper organization of such a department.

This Committee, after several preliminary meetings, and several visits to the various places of detention in the city and its neighborhood, called a public meeting of ladies, at the Lyceum in Broadway, on the 18th of January, at 11 o'clock, A. M.

At this meeting, after due statement of the aims of the parent association, and the part intended to be taken by the Female Branch, the Reports of the Visiting Committees were read, in order to give a general idea of the necessity for some action, and the probabilities of success. The Reports here follow, in the order in which they were presented to the meeting.

The Committee appointed at the last meeting of the Executive Committee, to visit the Penitentiary on Blackwell's Island Report:—

That on Wednesday, January 8th, they started in company with Mr. Roome, one of the Commissioners of the Alms House. Arriving at the Alms House, we waited a short time for the boat. Were politely treated by the Matron, who seemed to be a humane and sensible woman. Dr. McLellan, the resident physician, who also has charge of the Institutions upon the island, accompanied us thither. We were rowed by eight able-bodied men, comfortably dressed. Were told they were paupers, but retained, as some efficient men were necessary in the establishment.

General Appearance of the Prison.

At the Penitentiary we found an appearance of general good order within its walls. The long rows of cells, the grates and locks immediately filled the mind with images of crime, disgrace, and punishment. The course, plaid, winter costume of the convicts, was in keeping with the paved floors, and rough, strong appearance of every object. As far as we could discover, the physical wants of the prisoners seemed properly cared for.

Appearance of the Women.

We were conducted to the long passage that encloses the cells, and there saw about forty women, black and white, but chiefly black, who were, except about half a dozen, who appeared to be doing nothing, employed in picking oakum. The temperature of the place was good. The general expression of the faces of the convicts was deplorably brutified, with very few exceptions.

Left this room and went to another building, where we saw forty-seven women spinning and sewing. There were only three or four wheels. The keeper sat in a contiguous room, and overlooked the women through an opening. These women looked clean and comfortable, and were at work diligently. It is obvious that they can talk together without restraint, if they are not noisy. This room was not ventilated, except through the opening into the next; of course the atmosphere is highly deleterious.

Individual Cases.

1. The first person we conversed with, was a little Irishwoman of decent appearance, apparently fifty years of age. Her countenance, though not depraved in expression, was rather imbecile, and a little wild. She had been confined, with brief intervals abroad between successive recommitments, seventeen years, on the charge of disorderly conduct, produced by intoxication. On being left alone with her a moment, one of us said, "Have you tried to serve God at any time these last seventeen years?" "No, I have not," she replied, "Have you had a religious education?" "Yes, I was once a member of a Presbyterian church, and know all about religion, but I never think of it now; it is true, I have not tried to serve God these seventeen years."

2. Observed an idiot, or insane woman, about thirty years of age, wandering about in idleness. Wilson, the keeper, said it was difficult to keep her from burning herself, so imbecile is she. This surely is not the place for her.

3. A young creature about sixteen, a little deaf, was pointed out to us. She had "committed herself," having no home. Her history was, that her parents had died of cholera, and from that time she had been thrown from one den of profligacy to another. She refused to answer directly and consistently the questions put to her.

exhibiting the perverse imbecility of those who have no friends, no cherished affections, no principles, and all whose habits of thought and action are accidents.

4. Next talked with a German woman who also "committed herself" on account of destitution. Dr. McLellan gave an exceedingly good account of her: said she was never charged with theft or intemperance, was very capable and laborious, and was skillful in the use of the needle. She is between twenty and thirty.

5. Harriet Thompson, of the same age, was then shown to us. Presumed to be an American. The expression of her face anxious and sorrowful. She will be discharged on the 17th June next—has no place to go to; acknowledged she had led a disorderly life, but is earnestly desirous to abandon it. She did not tell, what Mr. Wilson afterwards told, that she was an inveterate drunkard.

6. We found a Scotch girl, by the name of Jane Moore, about twenty-seven years of age. She is friendless, and has been bred a milliner. She has worked for respectable persons, but her propensity to drink makes her useless, and she has been severally discharged by all her employers, and has no acquaintances but profligate persons. She has nowhere to go, and leaves the Penitentiary on the 16th of this month.

7. The most interesting case, perhaps, was that of Elizabeth Crosby, to be discharged January 11th, ensuing. This poor girl has been committed more than once, has no place open to her but haunts of infamy. She said, with many tears, that she was heartily sorry for the life she had led, and wished she could be sheltered anywhere, that she might live worthily. Never saw a human being, to all appearance, more afflicted.

8. In one of the hospital rooms we were shown a nurse, a colored woman, who had been committed so many times, that she had no exact notion of the number. Her state of health is perfect, and her muscular power astonishing. She is no thief, and is chargeable with nothing but the reckless riot into which she falls when drunk. She understands cooking, and all manner of housework; is to be discharged in a few days. Mr. Roome proposes to get a temporary asylum for her, at the "Colored Home." She has a silly look, and if she might be *put and kept* under proper temperance restraints, would be very serviceable in a family.

9. One young colored girl named Schermerhorn, we were informed was supposed to be innocent of the crime for which she was committed—was arrested for theft, and upon slight evidence judged guilty, and sent to this prison; measures were being taken to procure her release. Her countenance was quite cheerful and prepossessing, and the expression of her whole manner was that of frankness and innocence, we rejoiced in the prospect of her being speedily released from the corrupting influence of the prison.

10. A young intelligent wife and mother, of fine appearance, was committed, according to her own story, for intemperance. She had been religiously educated. By frequenting the theatre,

was led into vice, and found the way of the transgressor hard. Since being in prison said she had many serious reflections, and was sincerely desirous of leading a moral life—expected her husband would soon take her out. As she spoke of her little daughter, four years of age, her whole expression and unaffected tears, showed that the mother still lived in the convict, that vice had not yet destroyed the strong feelings of parental affection. Might not the slumbering energies of this powerful principle be kindled into exercise, and joined with the influence of religious truth, made instrumental in her complete reformation, if she could be placed under favorable circumstances.

11. We spoke to a fine looking girl, in physical appearance; found she had lived by prostitution—was in good health—had been a Sabbath School scholar—after a few words addressed to her she turned away with a look of derision. Her name is Smith. Dr. McLellan considers her a hopeless case—Mr. Roome afterwards remarked that she spent most of her time in tears, comparing what she is, with what she might have been; vainly deploring with the anguish of mortified pride, her present degradation, rather than, with the spirit of true repentance forsaking her iniquity—ceasing to do evil, learning to do well. Might not the seed sown in her youth, be yet watered, and made, under right influences, to produce true penitential sorrow and thorough reformation?

Hospital.

The hospital connected with the Penitentiary is the receptacle of the sick from the prison, and the last resort of the sick from the streets of our city, whither they are sent, some at their own request, to recover, suffer, or die: receiving in this life a part of the wages of their iniquity—an earnest of coming woes yet more fearful—an awful spectacle of the righteous indignation of a God of holiness and purity.

More than one hundred women lay in bed in the different apartments. The rooms were clean, and the nurses seemed to be decent and kind.

Even here, where vice had reached its climax, judgment seemed yet tempered with mercy. We were told that many recover, but recover to return to their old haunts of vice, run the same round of sin, and come back to—this last home of the worst in crime. The whole scene was calculated to excite reflections the most painful, and compassion mixed with horror.

When the question was put, whether, in case of recovery, any would like to go where employment and a home free from temptation to intemperance and vice, would be furnished them, until, by their good conduct they could earn a certificate of reformation, a few responded in the affirmative. The physician assured us that nearly all would be willing to make the attempt. And there is certainly reason to believe, that from the near six hundred convicts, many would be easily prevailed upon to enter upon a life of virtue,

at the expiration of their term of imprisonment, could a suitable home be found for them, where this experiment of mercy could be tried.

Dr. McLellan informed us, that *nine-tenths* of this crime and misery is produced by intemperance, and that many of the inmates of this fearful place, have been committed from twenty to forty times; in fact honest people maintain them, and this is their asylum. A plain indication that on the two-fold score of economy and mercy, temperance efforts, as a preventive influence, demand the encouragement and fostering care of all who desire to prevent vice, misery, and crime of the deepest dye.

The number and employment of prisoners in the female department of the penitentiary, for the week ending January 4th, is shown in the following extract from the weekly report of the keeper—

Oakum Shop,	78
Sewing Shop,	54
Wash House,	16
Middle House,	15
Lanatic Asylum,	50
Belleuve,	75
Children's Hospital,	20
City Prison,	6
Hospital,	132
Work in General,	61
Invalids,	55

Total, 562

Of this number we were told that about *two-thirds* were foreigners.

Discipline and Reformatory Influences.

In the Female Department, the shower bath, and a reduction of rations to bread and water, with solitary confinement, are the only punishments in use. These are resorted to in case of refractory conduct. Their present modes of employment are various, as is shown in the above weekly report. The period of detention in prison, is from fifteen days to six months; the average time, three months.

Mr. Roome pointed us to a wall in process of being built, the design of which is to effect a complete separation between the male and female departments of the prison. An object much to be desired.

The Chaplain, much to our regret, was absent, but we were informed that bibles were furnished, one to each individual; also, many tracts were provided, but no general library belonged to the prison. We learned that two Matrons were soon to be appointed to the women's department, and we hail this as the commencement of a reform loudly called for by decency and humanity. At the same time we would express our conviction, that the number proposed will

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prove insufficient to carry out the system properly. A system of classification, according to their degree of moral depravity and age in crime, might prevent much evil to the young and less hardened in iniquity, arising from the contaminating influence of communion with those who were experienced in crime. *Each class would require the close supervision of a Matron.* Under such an arrangement, joined with a system of visitation of judicious, benevolent ladies, we think much good might be effected. Without this improvement the labors of the Chaplain must lose much of their power, if not prove altogether inefficient, the good influence of the Sabbath instructions being hindered by the unfavorable circumstances of their condition through the week.

Upon every inquiry on the subject, we met with facts confirming our impression, that a *Temporary Home* for the discharged convicts, such as has been alluded to, would promise much good to this misguided and degraded, but most unfortunate class of women.

FEMALE DEPARTMENT OF THE STATE PRISON AT SING-SING.

The uses of rational instruction to prisoners may be easily demonstrated as directly contributory to good order, and fairly inferred also in respect to their future conduct, from the brief experiment which has been made in the female department of Sing-Sing prison, during the year last past (1844). The following notices of the plan there pursued, and its immediate results, ought to encourage every person who can enter at all into the moral purpose of pain and penalties inflicted for the correction of evil-doers, and for defence of society.

In March last, Mrs. T. J. Farnham was appointed the Matron of the prison at Sing-Sing. Not long after Mrs. Farnham's removal to the prison, in a letter to a friend, she wrote: "It is my purpose, in the first place, to bring the women to a state of order and obedience. When that is accomplished, I shall endeavor to learn the state of their minds, and their several capabilities of improvement. Concerning the means of the latter, I shall look to you for some assistance." Her correspondent had long been a teacher of the young, but had never seen the interior of a prison; nor had she any acquaintance with that unhappy portion of our fellow-creatures, who are tried and tempted like the inmates of prisons; still she entered heartily into the vocation of her excellent friend.

The State supplies the women with no books but a Bible and Prayer book. The female convicts were then seventy-two—the prison is not constructed with accommodations for more than eighty. Nine of the seventy-two did not know a letter; about ten could read intelligently; of the fifty remaining, it is doubtful if any could make a continuous sense out of a book, without help. There

were seventy or eighty volumes of a discarded library, in the garret of the prison, or somewhere else, in a state of neglect. These books were, for the most part, exceedingly ill-printed, and generally of the most uninviting character. It is next to impossible to make people good or wise against their taste and liking. The difficulty, nay, the impossibility, of making poor ignorant creatures, like the convicts, read with utility or satisfaction, books like those which charity had provided for them, was entirely obvious. Another experiment was to be tried, and a lady of uncommon judgment was consulted as to the mode of supplying suitable books. This person not only afforded her excellent judgment, but by influence with her friends procured much of the money that was needed to furnish the necessary books. Some books of a religious character were retained for use of the convicts, and others were given and purchased.

For such of the convicts as were incapable of learning to read, books, chiefly of pictures, were given, that none might feel themselves neglected in the distribution. To the young, in a state of like ignorance, but capable of learning to read, the Spelling-Book of the Sunday-School Union was given, and other elementary books of the most intelligent character. Some were found curious to learn something of the world we live in, and, for such, a small globe of the earth, and the Mother's Geography, an excellent little compend, with well-colored maps bound up in it, were supplied. Mr. Roe Lockwood very kindly sent paper, slates, and pencils, other writing materials for obvious reasons being forbidden—with these they could learn to write, or draw, to amuse themselves, while they are shut up without employment, about two hours daily. Among the books furnished, was the Penny Magazine, Tales from American History, many small works of voyages and travels, and those publications of the Sunday-School Union, which describe the people who are objects of missionary labour. (It is indispensable that the books for their use be well printed, and of a tolerably large type. They read in a light which makes fine print useless.) The books are varied through a very considerable range of information, graduated, of course, to very different measures of intelligence, in the several readers. Some are fond of poetry; and good pieces, serious and entertaining, are read to them at convenient seasons.

Half an hour every morning, the convicts are collected in the chapel, and read to by one of the ladies—the Matron, or her very intelligent assistants. A suitable comment is made on what is read, and at the conclusion of the reading, questions are asked in regard to what has been heard. Mr. Sargent's admirable Temperance Tales are great favorites with them, and exactly adapted to their necessities, and their sad experience.

The writer has free permission to visit and observe these prisoners. Never could she have presumed upon such improvement in deportment—such earnest pains-taking—such gratitude. "We should never have been taught these things, had we not come here,"

say some. "How great a comfort are these books!" say others. "Will you send me a little Dictionary?" asked one, "that I may learn the meaning of words I do not understand." "Have you any Hymn books for us?" enquired others. "Which way from here are the Sandwich Islands?" or "How should we go to the Cape of Good Hope?" asked some. This may seem unimportant, but it is not, it exhibits awakened faculties. They who are seeking knowledge are not devising iniquity.

Many learn the Gospel History with intelligence, now that they are acquiring the knowledge of corroborative facts. Nothing but the actual sight of what they *were*, and what they *are*, could perfectly convince a keeper of prisoners of the beneficial influence of books upon their dispositions and manners.

From the great numbers of male prisoners, less has been done for them; but constant endeavors, with very small means, are in operation to obtain for them also a sufficient library. This is partly effected; and Mr. Weeks, one of their keepers, says, that many would rather take stripes than be deprived of their books. The utility of well-adapted books to ignorant and immoral persons is beyond dispute. If there be any way to turn a man from evil deeds, it is to give him *new thoughts*. If he ought to think of things "pure, honest, lovely, and of good report," how shall he find ideas, or examples of such things in his own corruption, or super-induced blindness? We must alter habits of thought before we can give efficacy to new motives.

An English writer on the economy of Newgate, says: "It is beneficial to permit the reading of books of an amusing character, which have a moral tendency; for in this way the mind is brought into a state which disposes it to other reading of a higher character, and to a more intelligent appreciation of the Scriptures." Such books as the Temperance Tales, Miss More's Domestic Tales, and Miss Edgeworth's Popular Tales, and some of Mrs. Sherwood's writings, are eminently calculated to illustrate duty, to reclaim from vice, and to dissuade from the beginning of sin.

Every individual who is decidedly immoral in act, is an injury and a burthen to society; and a *large class of such persons* is an intolerable evil. These miserable creatures are truly their own enemies—but not less ours; and as we recover them from transgression, we as truly, and more extensively, serve others, who might else be corrupted or preyed upon by them. One of the very best modes to turn them from evil and false ways, is thoroughly to inculcate in them what is lawful and right. It is a measure of self-defence as well as benevolence. Until it is done—and it never yet has been done, to any ample extent,—all is not done that might be done.

When instruction reaches the prisoner, and protection follows him back to the open path of free life, then our prisons will be vacant; and we shall rejoice and give thanks for our brothers and

our sisters who, having sinned, have repented; and have become like those who *need no repentance*—if such there be upon earth.

ELIZA ROBBINS.

NOTE—The Committee do not wish to have it supposed, that they consider mental cultivation or books, as a substitute for the agency of the spirit in the reformation of the immoral and abandoned. They know full well, that no amount of intellectual light or culture, ever did, or ever can, of itself, change the heart, and enable those to do well, who have been accustomed to do evil. While, therefore, they look upon mental cultivation with deep interest, as a valuable auxiliary in the blessed work of doing good to prisoners, they are sensible that the renewal of the soul, the entire change of purpose, without which external amendment is of little avail, is the high prerogative of Him who has said, "Ye must be born again." Every effort of philanthropy which aims at a result short of this, will ultimately prove a failure.

Mrs. U. P. WARD, who, in connection with Mrs. S. R. INGRAHAM, was appointed a Committee to examine and report "The condition of the Female Department of the House of Detention in this city, submitted the following

REPORT.

Some six years since, the condition of this prison began to attract the attention of several ladies engaged in a benevolent association, whose object is, "The prevention of Crime," and they commenced a system of visitation, and an effort to supply the prisoners with suitable reading. A library was collected by them, and books were loaned to those they visited, both in the male and female department. In the course of three years, however, many of the volumes were lost or missing, in consequence of there being no one to see that none were taken away by discharged prisoners. Notwithstanding the loss, they had evidence that good was done by this effort. The following case may be cited as an example. One of the visitors, in her labors among the poor, in the winter of 1841, met a widowed mother, whose son she had visited in his cell, more than a year before, put a good book in his hand, and obtained his name to the Temperance Pledge, with the promise of reformation when he should be discharged. She was informed by his mother that he had kept his pledges, and regarded her visits and kind counsels as the means of his salvation.

The prisoners of both sexes, when first visited by ladies, were under one roof, in different tiers of cells, under the sole charge of men, and daily exposed to gross improprieties. The visitors (of whom the departed Margaret Prior was most prominent) deplored this state of things, and unitedly resolved never to rest till some of the existing abuses were remedied. They represented the matter in various ways to the constituted authorities, and entreated that *two things* might be done.

1st. That the Female Prisoners might be put in separate apartments, and,

2nd. That they might have a judicious Matron placed over them. Both these things, by continued effort, have at length been effected, and a great reform, physically and morally, is already apparent.

A petition and memorial on this subject, and on that of a House of Industry, signed by several hundred ladies, was presented to the Common Council in July last, and responded to in due time, granting their request for Matrons, and providing for their appointment, both at the City Prison, and the Penitentiary, as soon as the necessary preparations could be made. The following is an extract from the memorial referred to.

"Your memorialists also beg leave to add, that their petition in relation to the appointment of a Matron for the female department at the Tombs and Penitentiary, is presented in consequence of crying abuses that have long been known to exist.

An average of some 60 or 70 women are usually to be found in the City Prison *without any employment whatever*—often at liberty to pass from cell to cell—under the sole care of men, and daily coming in contact with those of all principles and of *no principle*—detained in this situation, from week to week, and often from month to month, till they shall be proved guilty or acquitted. If condemned and sent to the Penitentiary, although they may have there some employment, yet the influences are for the most part the same.

A great *want* existing in either case is this, the counsel, care, and protection of one who could speak to them *as a mother*; by her countenance and words inspire hope, awaken new purposes, stimulate and fan the latent spark of self-respect, and teach them that by repentance, right intentions, industry and application, they may again rise in the scale of being. This same *want* once existed at Sing-Sing, but has been met, and with good results. That it may also be met through your kind agency in the two criminal institutions now under your jurisdiction, is the earnest desire and prayer of your memorialists."

Two Matrons received their appointment on the 12th of Aug. last, and entered at once upon the duties of their office. Since that time the number of females who have been committed to their care, has been 1970! Some of these have remained but a few hours, others have been detained for weeks and months. The simple fact, that so large a number of our sex enter the prison in the short space of five months, proclaims loudly the necessity that has long existed for Matrons of the right stamp, and the wonder is, that the community have slept over the subject so long.

The ladies have continued their stated and occasional visits with more encouraging results than formerly. They sustain two religious meetings during the week, in this department; one on Friday, at 3 o'clock, P. M., the other on the Sabbath, at the same hour.

A few details respecting discharged prisoners who have been taken into the families of different visitors, may serve to demonstrate

the fact, that their case is not always so hopeless as many had supposed.

A—A—, was imprisoned for an alleged theft, the temptation to which had been actual want. At the end of two months she was discharged—was a friendless, penniless, characterless stranger in a strange city. A lady employed her as a servant, found her competent and trust-worthy, and exceedingly grateful for a home. She has remained with her for several weeks, and given entire satisfaction.

D—K—, committed on a similar charge, but believed to be innocent, was taken by another visitor, several weeks since, and has proved thus far a truly faithful and deserving domestic.

C—M—, an orphan girl of fifteen, was committed on suspicion of a crime, that, if proved, would have sent her to Sing-Sing for a term of years. The visitors saw her at their stated meetings, manifesting deep feeling, and when conversed with, she protested her innocence with such apparent sincerity and grief, as to awaken unusual interest in her behalf. A member of the Common Council, whose sympathies were also awakened by the relation given him of her case, conversed with her, examined the charges tabled, and requested the ladies to call on her accusers, and learn their version of the facts, saying, if the testimony to be forthcoming was not stronger than he supposed, his convictions of her innocence would be confirmed, and he would see that she had counsel and was discharged. A day was spent in making the necessary investigation, and the result was, her full acquittal. She was taken from the prison in September last, to the family where she now resides, and has thus far given entire satisfaction, and no doubt is entertained of her innocence.

Other similar statements might be given, but these sufficiently illustrate the encouragement to effort. It may be seen at a glance that a wild field is opened in this department, for the self-denying labors of those interested in the welfare of their fellow beings.

A work yet to be done at the Farms, is the establishment of Sabbath School or Bible class instruction and the provision of a decent change of garments for all who are destitute, and who, on leaving, give promise of amendment. As the County makes no such provision, this is especially necessary for discharged convicts from the Penitentiary. A home needs also to be provided for the homeless; other doors need to be opened to them *than those that lead to deeper infamy*. The Christian women of our city need also to be more generally enlisted in behalf of this charity, so that where *one* has been *severely* benefitted by *past* labors, *HUNDREDS* may be by *future* effort.

NOTE—In the winter of 1843-4, several ladies, not connected with the association above named, also visited the City Prison, and through their agency another library was collected for the men's prison, and liberal donations of books obtained from publishers and others interested in behalf of prisoners. This Library now needs replenishing, and a large supply is also needed in the Female Department.

INSTITUTION FOR PAUPER CHILDREN AT LONG ISLAND FARMS.

The Institution at the Long Island Farms, under the care of the Corporation of this city, is designed for the reception of pauper children, from the earliest infancy to the age of ten or twelve years. There are usually from 6 to 800 children in this establishment, the eldest of whom are employed in manual labor, according to their ability. There is likewise a school, which all who are old enough have the privilege of attending. The Institution is under the charge of a Superintendent, a Matron, and Assistant Matron; and provided with nurses and attendants, who are sent there from the Almshouse and Penitentiary on Blackwell's Island. That there are great difficulties connected with the management of an establishment embracing so large a number of children, most of whom have never enjoyed the benefit of right training in any respect, will be readily conceded; but all who desire the prevention of crime, must feel it an object of the first importance, that every suitable means should be employed, to correct the wrong, and foster the right, in those who are so soon to take their places as men and women on the stage of action. The following circumstances first directed the attention of the writer to the subject of this communication. A short time since, a young mother, who from the intemperance and profligacy of her husband, had been obliged to send her three children to the Farms, came to reside with me in the capacity of nurse and seamstress. The week after her entrance into my family she went to visit her children, the youngest of whom was two, the second four, and the eldest not quite eight years of age. She returned with a heart almost broken, and it was some time before she could command her feelings sufficiently to tell me what it was which had thus affected her. It seems she had found her two little boys, who, though cradled in poverty, had been, I doubt not, as warmly beloved, and as tenderly cherished as my own little flock, covered with sores, afflicted with violent ophthalmia, and what certainly betrayed the extreme of negligence on the part of the attendants, the head of the baby was not only sore, but otherwise in a state that cannot with propriety be described here. This child had been carried there only five weeks previous, a bright, playful little fellow, in robust health, and perfectly free from every form of cutaneous disease. Now he was stupid, disinclined to play, and as the nurse informed the mother, moaned in a low tone, almost all night. On hearing this recital, we at once felt that something must be done; but unwilling, in such a case, to rely upon the testimony of one whose maternal feelings might bias her judgment, she was accompanied, two days after, to the Island, by a gentleman who felt a deep interest in the case, and determined to see and judge

for himself. He found her statements fully confirmed by his own observation, and the infant was accordingly brought away, and a boarding place provided for it, where it experiences a care and tenderness truly maternal. When first taken from the Farms, it was, indeed, a pitiable object. It seemed in constant terror, afraid to move, and if placed on its feet would instantly sit down, and remain motionless until taken up. It is now six weeks since the removal of this child, and it would hardly be recognized as the same child by those who saw it then. Its eyes and head are quite well, and its activity and playfulness are matter of astonishment to the kind friends who received it from motives of the purest benevolence.

I have mentioned this case only as an introduction to two or three remarks which I wish to submit to this assembly, about the situation of the children at the Farms. I mean the *little* ones, for probably the elder children, who are in school, or engaged in manual labor, are as comfortable as in most institutions of the kind, though it may well be doubted whether the law of love, if fully carried out, might not add greatly to the blessings of their lot, without at all increasing the pecuniary burdens of the community.

There are, in one of the rooms of this establishment, about one hundred children, from one to four years of age; some of them are the children of virtuous though poor parents, who have been compelled by stern necessity to send them from a home in which maternal love had hitherto watched over them, and shielded them from sorrow. Some are foundlings, who have never known parental love and care, but from their birth are cast as waifs and strays on a cold and cruel world; others still have been taken from vicious parents, whose very existence is a curse to their unconscious offspring. But they are all children, with the sympathies and feelings, and wants of childhood, and entitled from their very helplessness, wherever there is flesh in a human heart, to the kindest consideration and care.

The room in which these infants are kept is perfectly clean, and thoroughly warmed, but its only furniture is a low bench running round the apartment, on which the little creatures sit. There are no playthings, no means of exercise or amusement; nothing to break the monotony of the ceiling, the bench, and the bare floor, the floor, the bench, and the ceiling. If the little hands, for want of anything else to do, venture to take off a stocking or shoe for a plaything, the offence is often severely punished by the nurses, who are armed with a leather strap or rattan, and who are sent there from the Alms House, and sometimes it is believed from the Penitentiary. These nurses are in the habit of using the coarsest and most violent language to the children, who are thus subjected to a hardening process, which must in time obliterate every finer feeling of the heart. On one occasion, some time since, when a friend of mine was present, the children were running about and playing, forgetful for the moment that they had not the ordinary rights and immunities of happy childhood; suddenly, the assistant Matron

entered, and in a stern and authoritative manner called out for order and silence; in an instant every voice was hushed, the children huddled together on the low benches, and in the profound stillness, the falling of a pin might have been distinctly heard. I know this may be called by some the result of excellent management, but to me it is too much like the "order" that reigns at Warsaw. Those that know the untameable spirit of early childhood, and the difficulty with which the most judicious mother secures implicit obedience at that period, must feel that such abject submission tells a tale of severity (to give it no harsher name), which is extremely painful to contemplate. Besides, activity and amusement are absolutely essential to the healthy development of the physical and moral nature of childhood, and as truly among the wants of these little ones, as food or sleep, or clothing. If imbecility, or even idiocy do not generally follow such an unnatural system of training, it is because some redeeming influences have been brought to bear on these defenceless victims, to counteract its direct and necessary tendency. There is another evil connected with the management of this room, which demands attention. In the daily ablutions of the children, the healthy and the scrofulous, those who are covered with the most loathsome forms of cutaneous disease, and those who are entirely free from it, are often washed in the same water, and with the same cloth. This fact, which is in direct violation of the rules of the Institution, seemed to me utterly incredible, until I was assured of it, by eye-witnesses who had no motives for deceiving, and who could not be mistaken. The consequence of this outrage on common decency and cleanliness, is just what might be expected. Very few of the children escape sore eyes, sore heads, or cutaneous disease in some of its protean forms.

One thing more, and I have done. I have no wish to criminate the Matrons at the Farms, and yet justice to the helpless compels me to state that there is apparent to all who visit there without attracting particular observation, a want of gentleness and womanly tenderness on the part of every one connected with the establishment. Who does not know, how important is the influence of kind words and gentle tones in the education of the young; and how often a low soft voice, "That most excellent thing in woman," will subdue the irritation of the child, and hush the rising tempest, which might otherwise sweep all before it. I appeal to every mother present, if she would not far sooner lay the precious objects of her love beneath the clouds of the valley, than to know that they were placed where harsh, coarse language, severe looks, and corporal punishment for trivial offences, were the only influences to which they are subjected.

It may be said that many of these children have never known maternal kindness, and therefore cannot be sensible of the want of it. 'Tis true, and pity 'tis, 'tis true, that these motherless ones are, even from their birth, ignorant of the sweet influences of kindness, and therefore it seems to me the more important, that when they be-

come the objects of public care, this kindness should, as far as human means may avail, be secured to them. It is a fearful thing to send out immortal beings into the world, with crushed hearts, and blighted affections, and seared sensibilities, to repay the wrongs done them in infancy and childhood, by a career of crime and misery.

No one who has visited the institution, and witnessed the eager delight and affectionate interest manifested by the children, when a kind word or look is bestowed on them in passing, can doubt the extreme susceptibility of childhood to kind and tender impressions. Wo to those who pour gall and wormwood into the fountains of youthful feeling, to flow out hereafter in streams of bitterness over the whole community.

I am not so unreasonable as to expect, on behalf of these poor children, all the comforts and endearments of a well ordered home. It is the very fact that they can never know these endearments, which appeals so strongly to the sympathy and good offices of the benevolent. Those thousand ministrations of love which are prompted by a mother's heart, cannot be theirs; but they may, and surely they ought to be continually under the influence of that kindness, which, while it secures respect and obedience, understands the feelings and wants of childhood, can sympathize with, and relieve them. Thus only can wrong principles be eradicated, evil habits overcome, and right ones formed, and these young immortals trained to virtue and honor in this world, and eternal life in that which is to come.

S. T. MARTYN.

Since presenting the above report, my attention has been directed to some remarks of Mr. Combe, the well known writer on Physiology, Phrenology, &c., on the same subject. This gentleman, who visited the Farns School in 1838, noticed in the children "An expression of suffering and discomfort which was distressing to behold." Of the atmosphere in which they slept he says, "The consequences are visible in the appearance of the children; many of them are suffering under ophthalmia, and they present generally that sunken, inanimate and unhappy aspect which betokens blood in a bad condition from imperfect nutrition, and impure air. There is," he continues, "no stinting of food; but the digestive functions suffer from confinement in an unwholesome atmosphere, and hence the nutrition is imperfect."

"On my return to the city, I made inquiries of several persons how it happened that this institution is in a condition so unworthy of a great city, and various reasons were assigned. The distance of three miles from the centre of business, is mentioned as one reason why it is difficult for civic functionaries to extend their humane vigilance to these doomed children." In regard to prisoners,

pauper lunatics, and destitute children, existing upon public provisions, a new interest seems to be awakened in the community. Of a former day, Mr. Combe says, "The poor, the insane, and the criminal have few, and these are not noisy, advocates, and their claims are postponed. Lastly, it is an unpopular duty to expose the imperfections of any American institutions, and hence the actual condition of these establishments is really unknown to the great body of the upper classes of the city who would otherwise be well disposed towards their improvement."

Mr. C. subsequently proposed in one of his public lectures, "To avoid himself of this means of calling public attention, in the most respectful manner possible, to the condition of the poor children in the Farm Schools especially, but he was told that the suggestions of a foreigner would give offence, and retard instead of advancing the object of improvement." He did not act upon this advice, but stated publicly what he had observed, and his remarks being reported for the newspapers, neither gave offence, nor produced amendment.

This was seven years ago. What has been doing all this time? If any large calculation entered into the economy of charity, it is obvious that imperfect care of children thrown upon the public provisions, is only so much augmentation of public burdens *in time to come*. It must be concluded that multitudes of these children die outright, of the privations and miseries incident to their condition; these being left out of consideration, the survivors must be either good or bad members of society—must be useful or injurious in the community. If their faculties are stifled in the first stage of development, they bring imperfect intelligence to the services of future life; and if their health is abused, they never can have physical ability to act a useful part, in any, even the humblest station.

Perverted minds, and vitiated constitutions fail in the performance of duty, and in seasons of temptation, while yet they retain animal life; and this animal life must be sheltered and fed. Now a nursery of ophthalmia, of scrofula, and of various cutaneous affections, is only the preparation for blind asylums, and enlarged poor-houses, besides furnishing many incurable cases of vice to people penitentiaries and State prisons—for mingled with all superinduced disease is a strong sense of wrong-suffering to be avenged upon anybody and everybody. "The world is not their friend, nor the world's law,"—is it strange that after years of exasperation, the sufferers should be the enemies of that social system, which has not, and never has had, any regard to their well-being?

Beside the *present suffering* to be prevented by a kind and parental care of these poor children, we are to take into account all the moral evil which flows from a false policy and partial mercy. In this matter, the best mode of action is the cheapest in the end. What the children *cost* for their comfort and instruction, the men and women will pay for, in better health, better dispositions, better conduct in life. An ounce of prevention will demand less than a

pound of cure, and it will avail unspeakably more, by saving the whole cost of cure in excluding it altogether. S. T. M.

NOTE—We are happy to add to the foregoing Report, that the New Alms House Commissioners have commenced the work of reform in this department, and are carrying it forward as rapidly as the circumstances will admit. Buildings are now in process of erection on Randall's Island, which, when completed, will furnish facilities for classifying the children, and for providing them with suitable attention, never yet enjoyed. From the well known character of these Commissioners, there is every reason to hope that a thorough and permanent reformation will be effected wherever it is needed; and that salutary influences will be brought to bear on these unfortunate children, who must otherwise become a curse and not a blessing to society.

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After the reading of the various Reports, a Constitution and By-Laws for the Female Department, were presented and adopted, as follows:

CONSTITUTION.

ART. I. This Association shall be called the Female Branch of the Prison Association of New-York.

ART. II. The payment of two dollars shall constitute an annual member, and of TEN dollars a life member.

ART. III. The business of the Department shall be conducted by an Executive Committee, to be chosen annually, by vote; which Committee shall consist of a First and Second Directress, a Secretary, Treasurer, and twenty others.

ART. IV. This Committee shall have power to enact their own by-laws, fill any vacancy in their body, direct the Treasurer in the application of the funds, and call special meetings of the Society.

ART. V. It shall be the duty of the Executive Committee, to supply themselves with a book, in which they shall record the names of members obtained by themselves; to solicit subscriptions and donations, and to render an account of the same at each stated meeting.

ART. VI. The Secretary shall keep a register of the names of both life and annual members, the names of donors, and the amount of donations and subscriptions received; and faithfully record all business transacted by the Department at their stated meetings.

ART. VII. Previous to each Annual Meeting, the account of the Treasurer must be audited by a competent Committee.

ART. VIII. Any amendment or alteration of these articles, can be made by a vote of the majority of the members present, at the next meeting after such amendment shall have been submitted in writing to the Executive Committee.

BY-LAWS.

I. The stated meetings of the Executive Committee shall be held on the first Saturday of every month.

II. All stated meetings of the Committee shall be opened by prayer.