

## SENATE . . . . No. 223.

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### Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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IN SENATE, March 30, 1872.

The Committee on Prisons, to whom was referred the "Report of the Commissioners of Prisons," have examined the same and submit the following

#### REPORT:

Your Committee have had frequent occasion to consult with this Board, and have been impressed with the importance of their services and the faithful manner in which they appear to have discharged the responsible duties committed to their care.

While other States and nations of the civilized world have been reconstructing their theories of the treatment of criminal classes, Massachusetts has been comparatively inactive; and the creation of the Board of Prison Commissioners was, in the judgment of your Committee, a necessary step, opportunely taken in the right direction.

The subject of *reformation* in connection with the treatment and punishment of criminals, occupies a deservedly important place in the minds of those who are endeavoring to discover a method for the treatment of prisoners which will be best for society and the convict. The Commonwealth would be well served and the interests and protection of all communities be largely promoted if a system of prison government could be devised by which *all* criminals—men, women and youth—could

be made, not only useful to the State, while passing through the period of their prison life, but made also at the same time, better men and women. This subject was regarded of such importance as to cause the assembling for its consideration of an influential prison congress in the city of Cincinnati in the year 1870; and a call has been issued and delegates chosen by European governments, and the government of the United States, and also and also some of the State governments, to an International Prison Congress, to meet in London, in July of the present year, for the purpose of considering important matters connected with prison reforms.

With a view of obtaining a more thorough knowledge of these subjects, and for the purpose of removing, so far as possible, some of the evils connected with the system,—if such it may be called,—of government applied to the various prison institutions within the limits of Massachusetts, the Board of Prison Commissioners have, during the past year, given a vast amount of study and unselfish labor, as their interesting and able report will show.

Connected with the commission is an advisory board of philanthropic ladies, whose services and advice have been of the highest practical value to their associates.

This commission meet once in each week to discuss and review their work; and besides these meetings, a portion of the members of the board are nearly constant in their visits to prisons, and attention to the duties of the board. This service, and even the travelling expenses of a part of the board, are cheerfully given to the State without compensation,—the secretary being the only member that receives pay. And for valuable services thus rendered the commission and advisory board deserve, and doubtless will receive, the gratitude of the people of the Commonwealth.

The legislation recommended in the report of the commission has been reported to the legislature.

J. S. POTTER, *Chairman.*