

OVERSEERS REPORTS

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The Committee appointed by the Honorable General Assembly at their Session in October last to examine New Gate prison, and take into consideration the various alterations and other objects recommended in the report of the Overseers of said Prison-with directions to make report to this Assembly, whether any and what alterations are necessary in the buildings of said Prison, and what other improvements may be made by the introduction of other employments than making nails, or in any other way; together with a plan of any alterations or new buildings deemed necessary, with an estimate of the expense attending the same.

Respectfully Report, That they have attended to the duties assigned them, and have visited and attentively examined the prison and other objects referred to their consideration. The prison they find in as good condition and as well conducted as can reasonably be expected under the present arrangement and mode of confining and employing the prisoners-To the food and clothing of the prisoners your Committee are of opinion no well founded objection can be made But they are impressed with a full conviction, that the very (contracted,) filthy and wretched subterraneous Cabins into which the prisoners are indiscriminately crowded and where they pass the nights, do not afford proper lodgings for any but the most atrocious offenders.

At this time the number of criminals confined is Fifty nine 34 of whom are white, and 25 are men of colour-more than half of this number are sentenced for a period of three years and under. There can be no doubt that at least in some cases compunction soon follows the commission of the

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crime, and the offender repents and might under suitable treatment be reformed.

In this frame of mind he is sent to New Gate for a short period and thrown into a most execrable Dungeon, and amalgamated with a gang of the most corrupt, depraved and incorrigible wretches that ever disgraced the human form- the consequence naturally and almost necessarily follows that every remnant of virtuous feeling is soon obliterated and all susceptibility of good impressions wholly destroyed-

He finds no discrimination made between himself and the vilest offenders with whom he is incarcerated, and amongst whom it is impossible for him to exist unless he manifests and cherishes the most infernal disposition-Thus more tyroes in sin, placed in this School of iniquity soon become confirmed and inveterate Villains,-and after one or two years apprenticeship, under the most accomplished instructors are let loose to prey upon the Community a thousand fold more depraved than before their confinement Your Committee would therefore recommend that some arrangement be made to separate the young and least depraved convicts from the most abandoned and incorrigible offenders. Do facilitate and effect which in some small degree-and for the better accommodation of the guard your Committee recommend that the guard house be enlarged to the extent of Seventeen feet westward so as to admit of making two additional stone rooms for the prisoners each 15 feet by 12 in the clear. This addition to correspond both in the construction and materials with the present building-The prisoners may then be divided

into clafses-and if deemed expedient a part of them may be lodged in a fecure place without being compelled to go into the subterraneous Cavern-

The expense of the proposed addition from the best estimate the Committee have been able to make, will not exceed One thousand Dollars-Stone are near at hand suitable for the purpose, and much of the labor of getting them out-preparing them &c may be performed by the prisoners under the direction of some competent Mechanic-

The prisoners may be employed in this way at much lefs expense to the State, than at nail making-

The labor of the prisoners it appears has been, from the first establishment of the prison and now is chiefly confined to making wrought nails-Your Committee are led to doubt whether at any period this businefs has been productive of any profit-At any rate it has not only been unproductive for the last Ten years but has subjected the State to a very great and alarming expense as will fully appear from the following statements (viz.)

The Committee from an examination of the accounts of the overseers of the prison in the Controllers office find that the amount of the expenditures on account of the prison for the last 10 years, commencing the 1st of January 1809 and ending the 1st of January 1819 is127,618¹⁵/₁₀₀ doll

The aggragate amount of receipts, for nails and other articles made and sold during the same period 43,401²³/₁₀₀
To which add the increase of nails and other stock, since the commencement of that time valued at 5,638⁵⁶/₁₀₀

Total receipts and increase of Stock is 49,039. ⁷⁹/₁₀₀

Which being deducted from the expenditures shows the actual loss and expense to the State for the last Ten years to be $78,578 \frac{34}{100}$ dollars or an average annual expense of $7,857.83 \frac{34}{100}$ dollars. For the last 4 years the expenditures have been greater, and the receipts less on an average than for the six preceding years. The aggregate expenses for the last four years ending the 26th day of December 1818 amount to $58,076 \frac{68}{100}$ dollars and the whole receipts during the same period to $10,949 \frac{64}{100}$ dollars. to which if there be added the increase of nails and other stock on hand at the close of the time [?] estimated at 5000 dollars and deduct the amount of both sums from the Expenditures will show the loss and expense over all receipts and increase of stock for the last four years to be $42,027 \frac{4}{100}$ dol. or an average annual Expense of $10,531 \frac{74}{100}$ Which sum is about 1500 dollars more annually than would have been required to defray the whole expense of supporting the present number of prisoners in total idleness. The losses which have accrued in pursuing the business of nailing appear to your Committee to have arisen from a variety of causes, but the principal cause seems to be a waste of the Stock or nail rods by the prisoners manufacturing them into nails, from their inexperience and disposition to waste. From the accounts in the Controllers office, rendered by the Overseers of the prison it appears that the whole quantity of nail rods purchased for the use of the prison in the course of the last ten years has been $291 \frac{1}{2}$ tons 5 23^{lb}

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The whole weight of the nails and other articles made from nail rods, including what remained on hand at the close of the same period is only 1^t56 19.1..24^p. which shows, that in manufacturing, a loss in weight has been sustained of 134 31 27^p Equal to about 46 per cent of the whole quantity purchased, or nearly one half-

To which loss if there be added the expense of coal, tools and other necessary charges; it will be found that the average cost of every pound of nails made at the prison for the last 10 years has at least been equal to the cost of two pounds of nail rods, or from 14 to 15 cents per pound during which time the nails have been sold by the quantity at from 10 to 12 cents per pound

The present price is only 10 cents, and the article a very dull sale even at that-Cut nails have so far superceded the use of wrought nails for all ordinary purposes-that the sales of the latter have become very limited and the quantity on hand is constantly increasing-

The amount of Stock on hand the 31st day of December last as appears by the report of the Overseers of the prison, was valued at 8.943 $\frac{\text{no}}{100}$ Dolls and consists chiefly of wrought nails, which with some small additions of nails of particular sizes to keep up an assortment, will probably be sufficient to supply the demand for 4 or 5 years.

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From the preceeding considerations and exhibit of facts, a full conviction has been wrought on the minds of your Committee that the interests of the State imperiously demand a radical change both in the System and employment of the prisoners-

The Committee are fully aware that such a change involves many difficulties, and cannot suddenly and advantageously be effected-To form a new system with all the necessary details, is a work requiring much time, reflection, deliberation and investigation-They are however fully satisfied & persuaded that the subject is worthy the fervous attention of the Legislature and recommend it accordingly.

The subject of employing convicts in such a manner as to compell them to support themselves by their own labor, and induce them to reform their vicious habits having for a Century past engaged the attention of many men of the most distinguished talents in various parts of the world; and no satisfactory system having yet been devised-it cannot be a matter of surprize or disappointment, that your Committee with only a few days attention to the subject should not have been able to present you with such a plan They are however inclining to the opinion that Solitary confinement & Confining the prisoners so as to leave them the free exercise of their limbs in active labor Lodging them in such a manner that their strength may be renovated by refreshing rest-and as much as pofsible in separate apartments to prevent evil communications Manufacturing articles the raw materials of which constitute but a small part of their value-Employing a competent Superintendent of their work, who shall in some

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way be interested in the avails of their labor-must form some of the leading features of such a System.

Until a new System shall be matured and adopted, the Committee would respectfully recommend that the employment of the prisoners at nail making be gradually changed, and other employments introduced as circumstances may warrant-such however as can be established with little expense and at the same time afford reasonable ground to expect if not some profit from them;-that the State shall suffer less loss, than from their present employments.

The present Overseers aware that the State must necessarily be subjected to loss by Keeping the prisoners at nail making-have very judiciously introduced some other employments by way of experiment, such as making Shoes-Baskets &c- this has yet been done only to a very limited extent-and thus far it is believed by the Overseers to have produced a small profit-But whether they can be continued, and extended so as to give employment to any considerable number of the prisoners to advantage, remains to be decided by experience-It is only by experiments judiciously made that a knowledge of the best substitutes for the present employments can be obtained-

Your Committee further recommend that the Overseers of the prison, be authorized to continue the experiments already commenced,-and also to introduce new employments at their discretion, where the same shall not require new buildings to be erected or any considerable expense in furnishing stock tools &c-And that they cause a particular and accurate

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account to be kept of the expenses incurred in establishing and carrying on each branch, and of the avails thereof, from sales or otherwise- by which the property of continuing or extending the several employments may be ascertained.- Those changes are proposed as temporary expedients, and only calculated to lessen the existing costs, and not designed to divert the attention of the Legislators from the subject of a Systematic reform.-

All which is respectfully submitted

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