

probably be my final report from this Penitentiary, I would like to speak in more general terms than usual of the results of school training and discipline in criminal institutions.

Having given the subject considerable attention for the past five years, I am prepared to state that the benefits, both near and remote, occurring to convicts who have been placed under a properly organized and conducted system of prison school discipline, can scarcely be over-rated. A large majority of the inmates of our Penitentiaries is gathered from that portion of the human race whose minds, either through wilful neglect or want of opportunity, have been allowed to grow wild amid all the noxious influences of their daily surroundings.

Under such circumstances, those of dull, weak or sickly capacities soon dwindle into imbeciles or harmless paupers, while the more energetic and those for whom Nature has "lit the lamp of genius," being of necessity shut out from the respectable avenues to success, and unable to decipher the finger-board which warns the more fortunate of impending danger, rush blindly into the first opening that seems to lead to the desired goal until they soon find themselves entangled in the spider-like clutches of the law. To such active spirits the restraints of prison life are most galling, especially when the mind has no healthy object for exercise or contemplation, which must invariably be the case with the illiterate.

The advantages of systematic mental training are, I repeat, incalculable, if we regard the reformation of the criminal and the general welfare of society as the ultimate design of penal institutions. During the course of my labor as school teacher in this Penitentiary, I have found it an interesting study to watch the physical as well as psychological changes apparent in a wholly illiterate man during the process of education.

Gradual indications of growing self-respect are first observable in the abandonment of slouchy habits and in the increased attention given to neatness and cleanliness of person, while the facial expression, instead of wearing a careless or defiant aspect, acquires a tone of modesty, sometimes approaching timidity. As education advances a more confident manner is exhibited and traces of inward thought become discernible. In the great variety of persons and nationalities that come under notice in this connection, one would naturally expect to find much dissimilarity in character and disposition, but the mental diversity is by no means so great as is commonly supposed, and a competent teacher can always adjust his discipline to the peculiarities of each individual case. This leads me to remark that this particular department of prison discipline does not appear to have been successful in enlisting that degree of attention and support from the Legislature which its importance demands. It seems merely to have been recognized as a supplementary office whose duties were to be done with the greatest economy and without much regard to efficiency; or, as if the salary had been first provided, and then the most convenient person or persons sought to be the recipients thereof. Of course, there will never be any difficulty in finding plenty of under-officials willing to supplement their not very munificent salaries by undertaking the additional duties of school teaching, for which they imagine their ability to read and write a sufficient qualification. Simply to listen to the rehearsal of a committed task is the most insignificant part of the business of a competent teacher, who should mainly seek to make his pupils interested in the pursuit of useful knowledge and to inculcate in them *habits* of thoughtful observation, for it is by such means alone that teaching becomes of any value or permanency to this class. Now, it is evident that these results cannot be obtained where the school superintendence is placed in the hands of a number of uninterested officials, whose chief aim would be to hurry through a disagreeable half-hour in the easiest possible manner. On the other hand, the monitorial system, under a properly-qualified head, has many advantages to recommend it. The manifest superiority in a pupil appointed to the post of monitor or assistant renders it a prize eagerly sought after by the juniors, while the self-respect engendered in the occupant of that post becomes a characteristic of the individual—destined, perhaps, to influence the remainder of his life—at the same time that his assiduity to prove himself worthy of the position has a doubly beneficial