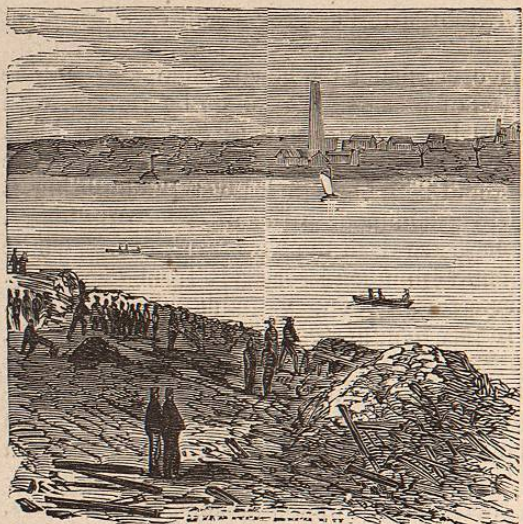


toil are devoted. Their toil, however, is not rigorous. Indeed, it is immensely lighter than many of us accomplish who are yet out of prison. Toil is also one of the most salutary forms of discipline that can be administered to criminals of any age, grade, or nationality. Without this there can scarcely be reformation, and the neglect of it has plunged most criminals into the sea of infamy in which they are engulfed. A few learn trades while on the island, which enable them, on their return to society, to earn not only an honest, but a comfortable livelihood.



GUARD-BOATS.

The convicts are all well clad in striped wool-engarments, and provided with suitable bedding and food. We saw two small regiments of them at dinner, which consisted of one pound of beef, ten ounces of bread, and a quart of vegetable soup per man. At breakfast, they are served with ten ounces of

bread, and one quart of good coffee each.

The number of prisoners retained on the island is less than it was twenty years ago, more being retained in the city prisons, and a large number are now annually sent to the Workhouse. On December 31, 1851, 803 were in confinement at the Penitentiary, and during the twelve months immediately following, 3,450 were committed. In 1853, 5,236 were committed, and at the close of the year 1,176 remained. The year 1869 began with 502 inmates; 1,563 were committed during the year, and 461 remained at its close, making a daily average of 477 prisoners, maintained at an expenditure of \$73,972.35. Of those committed 1,224 were males, and 339 females. 276 of them were between the ages of fifteen and twenty years; 427 from twenty to twenty-five; 316 from

twenty-five to thirty, after which the number in each semi-decade steadily decreases. Twenty were under fifteen years of age, ten of whom were girls, and but one was above seventy years at commitment, and that one a female. These figures confront us with the astounding fact, that about one half of all who enter the Penitentiary, are under twenty-five years of age, and appeal anxiously for the adoption of some measure to arrest the progress of these cadets of crime, ere they are irrevocably enrolled in the ranks of that army, whose march terminates only at the State Prison, or on the gallows.

Of the 1,563 committed, 730 were of American birth (but mostly of foreign blood); 482 came from Ireland, 168 from Germany, 74 from England, 25 from Scotland, 24 from Canada, 13 from France, 12 from Prussia, and the remaining 35 represented the other countries of Europe and the West Indies.

Of the crimes with which they were charged we may state that 1,078 were committed for petit larceny, 259 for assault and battery, 34 for grand larceny, 27 for burglary, 22 for vagrancy, and a smaller number for nearly every other species of mischief in the catalogue of crime. The largest number were committed for six months, and the next largest for two months; 62 were for one year, 6 for eighteen months, 12 for two years, and 3 for four years; 1,146 were committed for the first time, 245 for the second, 94 for the third, 41 for the fourth, 17 for the fifth, 6 for the sixth, 7 for the seventh, 2 for the eighth, 1 for the ninth, and 4 for the tenth term.

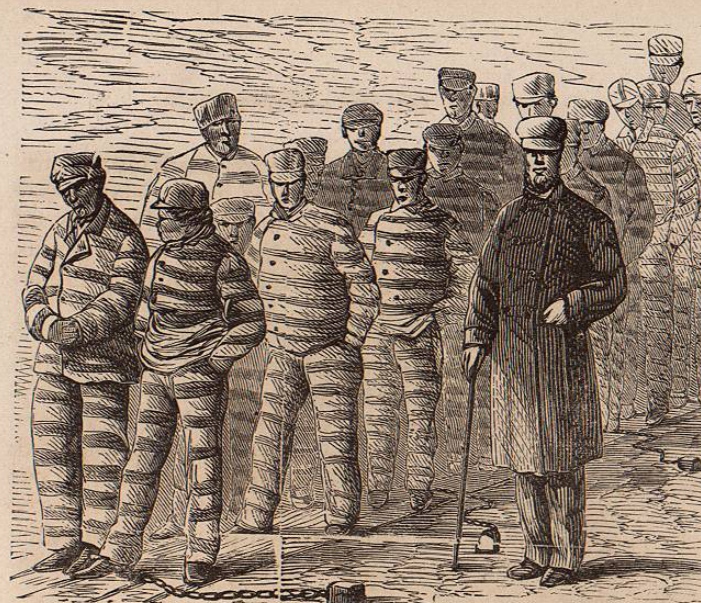
Of the 1,563, there were unmarried 962; married 507; widows 68; widowers 26. Of their mental culture we are informed that 1,052 could read and write well, 156 could read and write imperfectly, and 355 were totally uneducated. Of their former occupations we observe that of the males 394 were reported as laborers, 59 teamsters, 53 waiters, 52 shoemakers, and the remainder were scattered through over a hundred trades, though in fact many have never followed anything. Of the females, 224 were reported as domestics, 53 seamstresses, 13 dress-makers, 10 laundresses, etc. These are employed with the needle, and in other branches of usefulness around the Institution. One cannot look over an audience of these convicts, and meet the glances of their brilliant eyes, without being assured that the Penitentiary contains as much talent as any other structure in the county

of New York. And how sad the reflection that this magnificent pile of masonry, that crowns this green island, is a crowded pandemonium—an empire of fallen Lucifers, of wasted energies, disappointed ambitions, and perverted genius, not likely to again rise to a virtuous life, or a blissful immortality.

The moral condition of prisoners has from a remote period enlisted the sympathies of the benevolent, and led to associated efforts for their relief, yet improvements in prison discipline progressed but slowly until within the last fifty years, leaving still ample scope for the study of the thoughtful. Justice is not often administered with undue severity in our country. Indeed it is frequently quite too lax to promote the public good. Yet the best ends of penal justice are not often secured in our public prisons, and are far too frequently utterly ignored.

The object of imprisonment should be three-fold: 1. To separate the culprit from society, whose security he endangers, and whose confidence he has forfeited. 2. To make him sensible of the law he has violated; and 3. To secure if possible his reformation and return to the useful walks of life. The first two parts are tolerably well secured in all countries, but the last and most important is rarely attained, and far too seldom attempted. A keeper of a prison should be selected for his moral qualities, and one who ignores or scoffs at the reformation of a convict thereby demonstrates his utter incompetency for so important a calling. Every possible incentive to reformation should be held out, and every influence introduced and fostered likely to excite the desire of amendment, or to bring up from the depths of his fallen nature the return of buried manhood. While the reformation of the criminal is neglected, a large percentage of those under confinement, especially the younger and more hopeful portion, are certain to return to society more determined villains than when they left it, and the penal institution, instead of suppressing, virtually increases the crime.

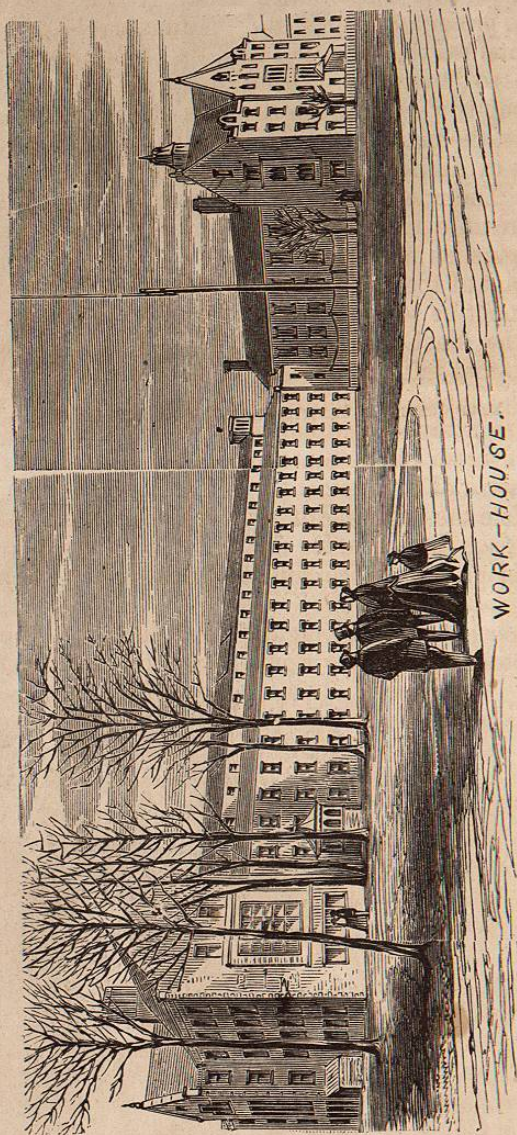
The Commissioners have had under advisement for some time past the matter of introducing a more rational system of reformatory discipline, than that of mere compulsory toil. The prisoners have been carefully classified, and a system of evening school instruction introduced. The matter of entering the school is entirely voluntary, though after entering they are not allowed to abandon it at pleasure. The school was



MALE CONVICTS. PENITENTIARY BLACKWELL'S ISLAND.



FEMALE CONVICTS. PENITENTIARY BLACKWELL'S ISLAND.

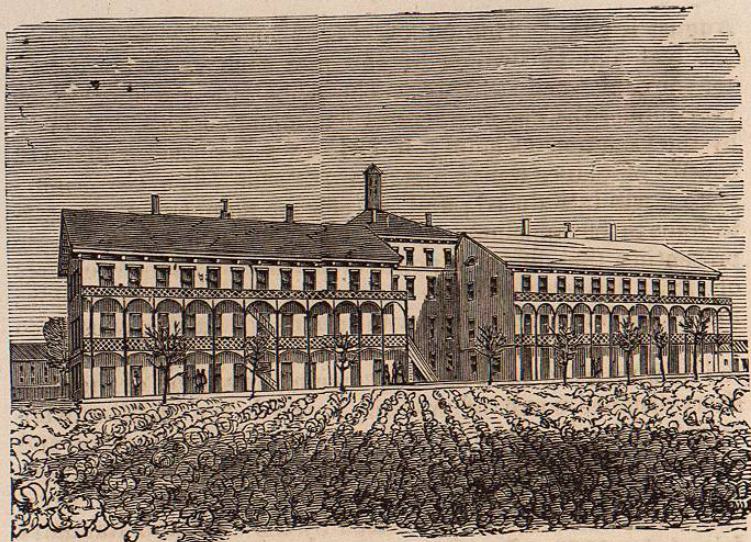


WORK-HOUSE.
WORK HOUSE.—BLACKWELL'S ISLAND.

organized on the evening of November 16, 1869, under the auspices of the School Trustees of the Nineteenth Ward, who provided an able corps of teachers. At the opening session 130 were present as pupils, and on January 10, 1870, the register contained the names of 223 or 64 per cent. of those of the males so situated as to be able to attend. The largest number of pupils were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two years, the next between twenty-two and twenty-nine, the youngest of all being fourteen, and the eldest fifty-two years of age. The uneducated for the most part appeared anxious to acquire an education, and the more scholarly disposed to further pursue their studies.

For want of room the most judicious separation of the prisoners cannot be secured, but a system of merit marks analogous to the MacConochie, or "Irish system," has been introduced, so that faithful observance of the rules of the prison, and such conduct as secures the approval of the warden receives a monthly recognition, which the Commissioners report to the Governor of the State, recommending an abridgement of their term of confinement. We are happy to be thus able to chronicle the beginning of a more rational and humane system of prison discipline for mature criminals, which posterity will develop, and which will doubtless lead to excellent results.

Religious services are regularly conducted on the Sabbath by a Protestant and by a Roman Catholic chaplain.



THE NEW YORK ALMSHOUSE

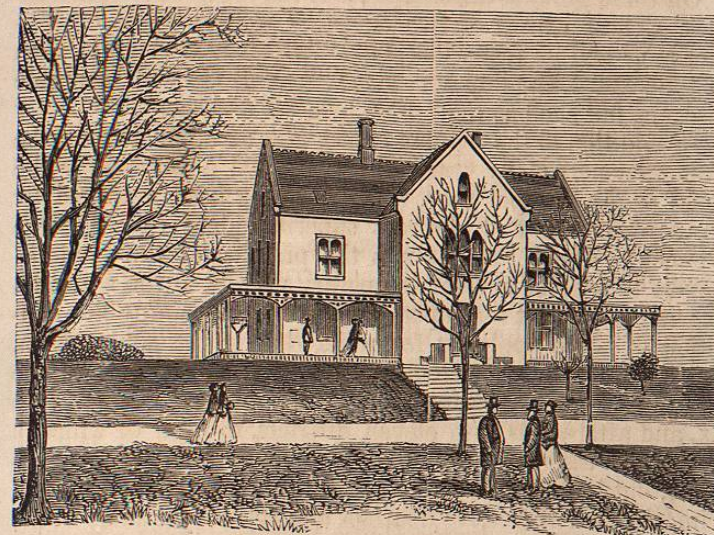
The paupers of Manhattan were long maintained by a weekly pittance granted by the authorities, in compliance with a law passed in 1699. The first public Almshouse, the need of which had long been felt, was erected in 1734, and stood on the northwestern extremity of what was long known as "the commons," on the site of the present New York Court-house. It was a two-story wooden structure 46 by 24 feet, with cellar, and was furnished with spinning wheels, shoemaker's tools, and other implements of labor. The church wardens were appointed overseers of the poor with authority to require labor of all paupers under penalty of moderate correction. The establishment contained a school for children, and was also a house of correction where masters were allowed to send unruly slaves for punishment. In 1795, a lottery of £10,000 was granted for the erection of a new building. A fine brick edifice, which was destroyed by fire in 1854, was accordingly erected on the site of the old building. After the location of the City Hall was agreed upon, the authorities resolved to remove the Almshouse. A tract of land on the East river, at the foot of Twenty-sixth street, was purchased, and the corner stone of the new Almshouse laid

August 1, 1811. This edifice was of bluestone, with a front 325 feet, and two wings of 150 feet each, and was opened for inmates April 22, 1816. The Alms House was for many years under the management of five commissioners, appointed by the Common Council; in 1845 it was placed under the control of one commissioner; in 1849 the "Ten Governor" system was introduced; and in 1859 the number was changed to four, to be appointed by the Comptroller of the City, representing the different political parties. The new charter of 1870 has changed the number of the commissioners to five. The buildings at Bellevue became too small, and as they were not suitably arranged for the different classes of inmates, the authorities in 1834 or 1835, erected extensive buildings a short distance south of Astoria, to which the children were transferred. These buildings consisted of a boys', a girls', and an infant "Nursery," and of appropriate school buildings, and were sold at public auction April 15, 1847. In 1828, Blackwell's Island was purchased by the City, and Randall's Island in 1835. In 1847, ship-fever prevailed frightfully among the Almshouse population at Bellevue, producing great mortality. Some persons entered the clerk's office and fell dead while their names were being registered. The new buildings now in use on Blackwell's Island were erected in 1847, and the inmates removed to them in the spring of 1848. The Almshouse department occupies the central portion of the island, and is presided over by a separate warden, who resides in the cosy wood cottage for a long period the mansion of the Blackwell's family, and said to be more than a hundred years old. The buildings erected in 1847 are of stone, and consist of two separate and similar structures, 650 feet apart, are entirely distinct in their arrangement, and each devoted to one sex only. They each consist of a central four-story 50 feet square, 57 feet high to the roof, and 87 to the top of the cupola, with two wings, each 60 by 90 feet, and 40 feet high. Each floor is encircled with an outside iron veranda with stairways of the same material. These buildings comfortably accommodate about six hundred persons each, adults only being admitted.

They are always tolerably well filled, though the great pressure is in mid-winter, and, on one occasion, eighteen hundred were huddled within these walls. No one can visit the New York Almshouse without being surprised with its exquisite neatness, and the perfect discipline and regularity that

reign everywhere through the buildings and grounds. The warden, Mr. James Owens, with no paid help except his clerk and the matrons, has for a number of years conducted this Institution, filled with ten or fifteen hundred aged, blind, and infirm persons, with an economy and skill deserving of special mention. The floors and walls throughout are as clean as soap, sand, and lime can make them. The beds are better kept than in our first-class hotels. Every morning they are all taken to pieces, the ticks and the bedsteads thoroughly brushed, after which they are readjusted and covered with a white counterpane. This simple process of brushing has preserved the Institution for years from all attacks of vermin. Not an empty garment can be found lying or hanging in one of the wards. The food which is ample and nutritious, is regularly and neatly served. But, inviting as are the buildings, the grounds are still more attractive. The walks have all been neatly covered with flag-stones or gravel; the flower and vegetable gardens, and the lawns with their thrifty trees, exhibit much taste and cultivation. Not a straw can be found on one of the walks or the carriage-ways, on every one of which may daily be seen the marks of the broom. The Almshouses were formerly the refuge of imbeciles, lunatics, and of able-bodied vagrants, as well as of the old and infirm. The former are now provided for in the Lunatic Asylum, and the latter very properly sent to the Workhouse. On the arrival of an inmate, he is immediately subjected to a bath, is warmly clad in new garments, after which he is conveyed to the Warden's office and formally admitted. He then undergoes an examination by the House Physician, from whom he receives a card, stating the ward and class to which he belongs. They are divided into four classes as follows: 1. Able bodied men. 2. Able to perform light labor, and serve as orderlies of the different wards. 3. Able to sweep the grounds or break stones. 4. Exempt on account of disease or old age. Some exhibit a willingness to perform all they are able, and others, addicted to idleness, are ready to evade toil with every pretext. It is the duty of the Physician to discriminate between them, and those assigned to light toil are compelled to submit on pain of being discharged. This admirable system of classification, introduced by the Commissioners, has saved the corporation from supporting armies of able bodied vagrants, and made the Almshouse population about fifty per cent. less than it was twenty years ago.

In 1850 there were in the Almshouse 1,313 persons, or one in 423 of the population. In 1860 there were 1,631 or one in 432 of the population. In 1870 there were 1,114, or one in 808 of the population. The number able to perform service among the females is much less than among the opposite sex. From these are selected the nurses, who keep the wards in order, and care for the old and feeble. The remainder partially demented, crippled, weakened from disease or infirmity, still render such assistance as they are able in sewing



KEEPER'S HOUSE.

and knitting. During the year closing January 1, 1870, there were 4,053 persons in the Institutions, of whom 2,979 were admitted, 1,696 discharged, 1,222 transferred to other institutions, 21 died, and 1,114 remained. Of the 2,979 admitted, 363 were Americans, 2,067 Irish, 260 Germans, 163 English; the remaining 111 came from Scotland, Canada, and other countries. They are admitted at all ages, from fifteen years and upwards. Of the 2,979 admitted last year, 46 were under twenty years, 437 between twenty and thirty, 435 between thirty and forty, 507 between forty and fifty, 569 between fifty and sixty, 609 between sixty and seventy, 276 between seventy and eighty, 86 between eighty and ninety, 13 were over ninety, and 1 over one hundred years of age.

At least seven-eighths of all thus thrown upon the charity of the city are of foreign birth, and most of the remainder reduced to pauperism by idleness or dissipation. Two wards in the building appropriated to the males, and two in the building for the females, are set apart for the indigent blind, who are sufficiently numerous to require an annual appropriation of \$25,000 or \$30,000 from the Legislature. The Alms-house buildings are valued at \$434,500 exclusive of furniture and grounds.

On these grounds are situated also the Hospitals for Incurables. These consist of two one-story wooden pavilions, 175 feet long and 25 feet wide, one of which is devoted to each of the sexes. The inmates are persons afflicted with incurable diseases, but such as require no medical treatment.

In addition to the regular Alms-house accommodations, the Commissioners many years ago established a Bureau for the relief of the out-door poor, which has long been managed by an experienced and discreet superintendent (Mr. George Kellock). Until 1867, it was the practice of the Commissioners to appoint several temporary visitors at the approach of winter, to assist the superintendent in examining the condition of those applying for relief during the cold season. But it was found that from inexperience or indifference the work was so poorly performed, that the city was divided into six, and afterwards into eleven districts, to each of which a visitor was assigned, who not only visits each applicant at his home, but investigates the causes of pauperism, sickness, and crime, in their respective districts, and reports the same to the superintendent. During 1869, the number of families relieved with money amounted to 5,275, with fuel 7,555. More than \$128,000 were disbursed through this branch of our public charities alone.

The Commissioners have felt the necessity of providing a temporary shelter for the houseless poor, and have repeatedly appealed to the Legislature for authority to lease houses for that purpose. To prevent serious suffering among a class of poor but reputable persons, who from various reasons might be deprived of home, the board, in 1866, fitted up a portion of a prison then unoccupied as a temporary lodging-house. Over two thousand were thus lodged during the winter. Each applicant was questioned, to prevent abuse, and gave satisfactory reasons for destitution. None were admitted who were intoxicated, and in but few instances any who ap-

plied the second time. The necessity of restoring the prison to its original use discontinued for the time this arrangement.

The superintendent of out-door poor has his headquarters in the central office of the Commissioners, in the new and beautiful building corner of Eleventh street and Third avenue. Here the Commissioners hold their regular business meetings, and preserve the archives of the department.

The New York Alms House, for order, neatness, discipline, the general care and comfort of its inmates, compares favorably with any institution of its kind in this or any other country; and the other outside arrangements for the relief of the destitute and the sick, are confessedly administered with marked discretion, and are every way worthy of the great metropolis.

THE NEW YORK WORKHOUSE.

FOR the proper administration of punitive justice, a variety of institutions are required. Hence, we have the State Prison, for the long confinement of persons guilty of the higher crimes; the County Jail or the Penitentiary for criminals not yet as deeply depraved as the preceding; the House of Refuge, or the Juvenile Asylum for vicious, truant, and vagrant youth; and to these the authorities of New York have added the Workhouse, for vagrant and dissipated adults. The building is situated on Blackwell's Island, between the Alms-house department and that devoted to the Lunatic Asylum. The first effectual step taken for establishment of this Institution, was at a meeting of the Board of Aldermen June 26, 1848, when Clarkson Crolius presented an able communication on the subject, which was referred to a special committee of three. The board of Assistant Aldermen also appointed a committee to assist in the deliberations. On the 12th of February, 1849, the committee presented a voluminous report in favor of establishing the Workhouse. On the recommendation of the Common Council, the Legislature passed the act for its establishment April 11, 1849, and the department was duly