

Woolley, Celia Parker and N. Halsted. From the Minutes of “Regular Fourth Wednesday Meeting, April 24, 1889.” Chicago History Museum. Chicago Woman’s Club Records. Box 1, Folder 11.

The afternoon was devoted to the consideration of the Norwood Park School. Mrs. Heywood opened the discussion by giving a general statement of facts: Mrs. Marian made the following appeal for publication in the daily papers and moved that it be endorsed by the Club. This motion was carried.

[Newspaper clipping:]

According to the last report of the State Board of Public Charities, Illinois is maintaining 470 children in her poor-houses, simply clothing and feeding them and keeping a roof over their heads. Not one-half of them are in schools and they are growing up to be paupers and criminals. This same report states that the condition of the children is deplorable and that the State of Illinois is far behind other States in her care for dependent children. Of the 200 children in our Reform School at least one-half have drifted into crime through neglect. There are from twenty-five to forty boys in the Cook County Jail, some more than \$100 per capita to care for these children, while at the same time they receive no education, and under present conditions must inevitably become paupers or criminals.

Such a state of affairs may well alarm thoughtful men and women. Dr. Thomas said in a sermon not long since: “I tell you it is a public shame, it is a disgrace, it is a sin for society in the nineteenth century to turn round and punish men and women for being and doing what it never gave them a chance not to be and not to do.” One of our judges in passing sentence on a youthful criminal recently said: “It is a grace question whether society has a right to punish criminals when it makes no effort to prevent crime.”

The experience of the State School in Michigan may help us to solve our problem. This school was established at Coldwater sixteen years ago and there are now no children between the ages of 2 and 16 of sound mind and body in any poor-house in Michigan, and there are only 200 in the institution at present out of a population of 2,000,000. In 1874 there were 200 children there, and in 1889 there are 200. The population of Michigan has increased 50 per cent in these fifteen years, and the number of dependent children has decreased in the same ratio.

About two years ago a Home for Dependent Children, modeled after the Coldwater School, Norwood Park. This is a move in the right direction, but the home is crippled for lack of money and suitable accommodations. This is the only, non-sectarian institution in the State of Illinois whose governing board has complete control of the children committed to its charge. The plan is to have each boy transferred to a suitable home as soon as he is qualified to give satisfaction in it, since it is poor policy to keep boys in institutional life longer than is necessary. That would tend to destroy their self-respect, individuality of character, and spirit of self-dependence. The boys are instructed in the common school branches, and it is desired to have them trained in agricultural and mechanical pursuits as far as possible. To accomplish this properly the institution should be provided with a farm near Chicago, where the necessary buildings and shops could be erected. Cottages should be provided that the boys may be placed in families of twenty-five to thirty, each cottage under separate supervisions, but all under the care of the general superintendent.

Now is the opportunity of the school. Mr. Milton George, of this city, offers to deed to it 300 acres of land in Glenwood, near Chicago, on the condition that \$40,000 are raised to furnish buildings. This chance should be appreciated. The business men of Chicago ought to realize that for one-tenth of the actual cost, of punishing crime the process of making criminals may be stayed, and join with Mr. George in accomplishing this end. The Chicago Women's Club feel that it is only necessary to present these facts to the generous and public spirited men and women of Chicago in order to secure the \$40,000. Not only do common justice and humanity demand that these dependent children be given a chance to grow into useful citizens, but the safety of the community requires it. Let us spend more money for the prevention of crime and less for the punishment of criminals.

The Women's Club asks for subscriptions. Will the citizens of Chicago respond to this urgent need, remembering that what is done must be done promptly, and that each day counts in this work? Subscriptions may be sent to Mrs. Marie C. Remick, Chicago Woman's Club, Art Institute Building, or to Mr. John T. Chumasero, No. 148 will be reported from time to time through the press of the city. No payments are to be made until the entire amount is subscribed.

Celia Parker Woolley, President.

N. Halsted, Secretary