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Letter from Laurin Dewey to James B. Finley

Laurin Dewey

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Rev. T. B. Finley
Editor
Cincinnati Co. O.

Ohio Penitentiary
Columbus Dec 16th 1847

Ohio Penitentiary
March 28. 50.

Father Finley:

Dear Sir: — I feel almost discouraged when I realise the great indifference in this State, on the subject of Prison Discipline. Temperance has its pekes and its orators, and its societies; the poor slave has his advocates and his pentens; the Heathen have their Missionaries, and almost every good cause has its volunteers; but where are the friends of the poor heart broken convict? — Look abroad over the State, and where do you find the permanent man that is giving himself up to this cause, or the press that speaks out for the prisoner. Father Finley cannot you take up this subject, and create a blast that shall be heard throughout the length and breadth of this State! The people are dead on this subject. Would to God they could be made alive! Something must be done. I will endeavor to do my part. The Legislature have appointed

me to examen the different systems of Prison Discipline in the U.S. and report to the next Legislature. I intend to devote the whole year to the subject. and make a report that shall be best. I send you a copy of the resolution. Perhaps you might get up a communication for the Advocate that would be of service referring to what had been done by the Legislature, and making some quotations from my Special Report. The subject referred to in the 6th page of that Report commencing - "The law" &c. has not generally ~~been~~ been realesed. No Report that I have ever read has ever alluded to this solemn truth. If you should write an article for the Advocate you might quote the two paragraphs commencing as above with effect.

But I have not touched the subject which I set down to talk to you about.

What shall be done to recommend a proper person for Moral Instructor? It is a delicate subject for me to touch. The present incumbent has not the first qualification. I prefer to have no one. He does not do the least good in the world. Is it not a sin to keep such a man in such an important position? We need now in this State a Prison Reform Society. The moral instructor of this Prison should be a splendid man capopable of originating a measure like this, and carrying it forward to completion. There should be a society formed this Summer and many other things done for the cause of the ill-treated and neglected convict. May the Lord give you strength of body and power of intellect to stand the ball, which is the prayer of

Louis Dwight

P.S. Some of the above is pencil

I cannot find the resolution I have alluded above and perhaps they did not pass the House