

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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SIXTIETH LEGISLATURE.

SENATE.

No. 111.

The Committee on Insane Hospital, which have had under-consideration certain charges against the management of the Maine Insane Hospital, ask leave to make the following report, and recommend its adoption.

E. L. PATTANGALL,
NAHUM T. HILL,

Com. on the part of the Senate.

A. P. MORRILL,
J. J. LINSOTT,
M. F. WENTWORTH,
ELERY F. GOSS,
J. C. MARBLE,
H. W. SARGENT,

Com. on the part of the House.

*To the Honorable the Senate and
the House of Representatives:*

The undersigned, a committee of your honorable bodies, charged with the annual examination of the Insane Hospital, have the honor to report, that in the progress of their examination of said institution early in the session, it became apparent that there were current vague rumors affecting the standing and usefulness of the hospital. A communication from the Trustees thereof was received January 25th, as follows:

“To the Legislative Committee on the Insane Hospital. We, the undersigned, Trustees of the Maine Insane Hospital, believing the insane hospital of our State to be an institution worthy of your patronage and that it should command the entire confidence of the public, and whereas certain impressions appear to exist in the minds of some and certain allegations are made in the public press that the hospital management, both on the part of the medical staff and the board of trustees, is not wholly judicious and correct, therefore we cordially invite your honorable committee to make, if desirable on your part, a free and full investigation into all the affairs of the hospital and the management of the same.

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| Signed, | J. S. CUSHING, SYLVESTER OAKES, J. H. MANLEY, C. W. JOHNSON, J. S. GILMAN, Mrs. C. A. QUINBY, | } Trustees of Maine Insane Hospital.” |
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In pursuance of this request, this Committee decided to enter upon such investigation as should enable it to ascertain the truth or falsity of the rumors. As there were no charges of any kind lodged with this Committee, nor any written complaint or petition other than the letter of the trustees, in

order to obtain evidence upon the rumors and irresponsible newspaper articles an order was obtained, February 3, 1881, from the Legislature, authorizing this Committee to send for persons and papers, and an official stenographer was employed by the same authority.

Your Committee have held twenty meetings, extending from January 24th to March 10th, 1881; every facility has been granted to obtain evidence to both the prosecution and the defence. Attorneys were employed by the respective parties, and the efforts of the prosecutors to maintain the positions they assumed have been met by the Trustees by a resolute defence of the institution under their charge. The Committee has felt that it was due to the people of the State that all rumors should be traced to their source, and carefully examined, to the end that if the management of the Hospital should be found unfaithful, inefficient, or inhumane, corrective measures might be taken; or if it should be found to be worthy of public confidence and support, the same should be reported to your honorable bodies.

As the result of our investigation, we respectfully present the following summary of our observations, and of the evidence obtained in our long and widely advertized series of meetings:

BOARD OF CONTROL.

The government of the Hospital is vested in a Board of six Trustees, selected and appointed by the Governor and Council, and charged by law with entire control under the appointing power. It is by law the duty of this Board, by a committee to make at least one visit to the hospital in each month, and full board meetings are held at the beginning of each quarter. It has always been customary to have at least one physician on the Board; at the present time there are four, as it is to this board that all questions of administration finally come, and in this board rests the final responsibility of maladministration. So, also, is the credit of judicious selection of officers and of whatever success may be achieved under their direction

due to the same guardians of this great public trust. The Board of Visitors, consisting of two members of the Executive Council, one of whom, we believe, has always been a physician, and one lady, came into existence under an act of the Legislature passed in 1874. This board is charged with inspecting and advisory powers, and its visits are, under the law, made without notice to the local officers; the members are all provided with full sets of keys, and among other duties they are charged with a careful supervision in the interest of kind and humane treatment, and with advisory powers relative to progressive or the measures designed to benefit the unfortunate wards of the State. A committee of the Executive is annually chosen to inspect the institution, and the Governor and Council may remove any Trustee, the Superintendent and Treasurer, when for the public interest they deem it necessary to do so. The financial affairs come finally before this body for final settlement.

WATER SUPPLY AND FIRE PROTECTION.

Upon this subject certain rumors and complaints were current, and your Committee has, by personal examination and thorough testimony obtained, reached the conclusion that the matter is fully and truthfully stated in the annual report of the institution for 1880, which has been laid before your honorable bodies. We have become fully satisfied that, with nominal expense a practically unlimited supply of water is available; and additions are now in progress which will largely increase the supply. It has been suggested that the supply be taken from the river, as an unfailing source. This would certainly furnish unlimited quantities, but as the scheme was, previous to the building of the present works, examined by experts and pronounced too expensive to be adopted, and in view of the fact that the present works are now sufficient, and are being increased, it seems to this Committee undesirable to recommend heavy appropriations for that purpose. We will add, that we have found the trustees

and all local officers entirely willing that such supply be furnished, but with one exception none would recommend it.

In regard to the insanity of the inmates, the dangers of fire are greatly in excess of those in as many private families as would comprise as many people. In other regards the degree of safety is far in excess of that enjoyed by people generally. The buildings are regularly patrolled, every hour during the night, besides being visited by an alternate watch in the intervals; attendants sleep in each ward with the patients; officers are on duty from five A. M. until midnight of each day; and throughout all parts, while the patients are not in their rooms, sane people are on duty. The entire heating is done by steam, and the lighting by gas; and the admirable fire apparatus is kept always ready for instant use. Your Committee witnessed the playing of six excellent fire streams at the same time, in the open air. And the officers were prepared to bring out six more. Two heavy streams were played from windows in the roof of the wings, at the same time, and the hose was run off one of the reels, and water applied in seventeen seconds, as timed by a member of the Committee.

It is the opinion of the Committee, that the system of fire apparatus is as thorough and complete as any devised.

SUPERINTENDENT.

Direct allegations or statement of opinions by witnesses unsupported by testimony of facts, but much enlarged upon by counsel for the prosecution, were introduced to show incompetency and inefficiency on the part of the superintendent. These are grave statements; the witnesses on this point were a medical officer whose services were, in the opinions of the Trustees, unnecessary, a discharged Supervisor, a discharged attendant and his wife, and the Rev. Dr. Butler. The medical officer stated under oath that he entered the service expecting to supercede the Superintendent; the Supervisor and the attendant gave evidence which to our minds went very far to prove the competency of the Superintendent, and Rev. Dr. Butler, (whose

wife is and has been a patient of the Hospital) testified to matters which had no foundation in fact, showing very clearly that his opinions was based upon false premises; the testimony shows that Dr. H. M. Harlow, the officer in question, entered the service in 1845, that he had previously served as assistant physician at the Brattleborough Asylum, and that he served in this institution in the same capacity until 1851, when he became Superintendent; he has served uninterruptedly in that capacity since. The evidence shows that he is at present fifty-nine years of age, is in good health and in full possession of the necessary physical strength to perform the arduous duties of the office which he holds. The universal testimony from all alike, is, that he has throughout exhibited a kind and even temperament, being always calm amidst the many perplexities of his arduous and responsible position. The testimony also shows that though calm, he has administered his great trust with firmness. That his removal of offenders has invariably been swift and sure. The Institution has grown up mostly under his care. Whatever of success has been achieved in the treatment of more than four thousand patients, of whom some fifteen hundred have been restored to their homes, has been largely the result of his skill.

Whatever of progress has been made in Maine in the treatment of insanity is due to his efforts more than those of any other man. It is admitted by counsel for the prosecution, that the Maine Insane Hospital stands to-day the peer of the most modern institutions of New England. This we believe to be true.

Letters from several of the leaders in the specialty were offered by the defence, and are on file with the secretary of this Committee, stating in unreserved terms the opinions of the writers, that Dr. Harlow is in the front rank of progress, and that the Hospital stands on a par with the best in New England. It follows, then, that the charges of incompetency and inefficiency must fall. A man must be judged by his works.

The Maine Insane Hospital stands as a monument to the philanthropy and humanity of the people of Maine; its beneficent work has endeared it to its supporters and protectors.

The history of institutions for the insane is replete with the records of suspicions and animosity. This is the fourth investigation of the Hospital since Dr. Harlow became its Superintendent; through them all he has come without reproach. A similar history pertains to most institutions, but it has been rare that one man has been able, by his force of character and conduct to survive such storms. Charges of the greatest atrocities have found credence in the public mind, and, upon examination, have proved the emanations of some fevered and distorted brain—employes discharged for neglect of duty, or for unkindness to patients, have, in revenge, fabricated tales of horrid abuses, or cunningly misstated some trifling fact, and rivals have sought to obtain by artifice and subterfuge a position far beyond their abilities to successfully manage.

The whole evidence from both sides has shown that Dr. Harlow has at all times been kind but firm; quietly attending to his arduous duties. Your Committee are of the opinion that through his long term of service he has faithfully performed his duty, and deserves the grateful thanks of the people of Maine, and that the charges brought against him are groundless and not sustained by the facts.

ABUSE OF PATIENTS.

Evidence designed to show that patients had been abused in various ways has been freely offered, covering something like twenty years of the hospital. The whole number alleged has been sixteen. It has been the desire of your Committee to allow the fullest scope to the testimony in this regard, and the fullest time and opportunity to introduce it has been granted. In ten of the cases the charges have been entirely disproved, or it has been shown that the offenders were discharged partly by the witness making them, and in six cases the charges were made without names of patients so injured,

or of the offenders, and also without dates. It was manifestly impossible to disprove such cases from the vagueness of the charges. None of the cases were claimed to be of such a nature as to leave marks of violence, or permanently injure the patient. It is apparent in cases of violent mania, it is necessary to use sufficient force to control the patient; otherwise they might injure themselves or other patients. In some of the cases it was clearly a matter of opinion on the part of witnesses, whether too much force was used; and it may have been that the opinion of some of the witnesses were prejudicial, by a scare of disgrace for having been discharged.

DISCIPLINE.

Claims of a lack of discipline have been made. We have heard all testimony that could be obtained on this point, and conclude that while there is an absence of any parade of authority on the part of the Superintendent, there is quietly enforced a very complete system of rules. The Superintendent has full power to enforce all rules, and though persistent efforts have been made by discharged officers and several discharged employes to show the contrary, it is clearly proved that no deviation of an employe from the letter and spirit of the rules has ever been reported to him, but was at once investigated, and if substantiated the offender at once discharged. It is also proved that he has discharged attendants in some cases, upon suspicion that they had broken the rules, and upon circumstantial evidence. In this connection it has been in evidence on the testimony of one witness, that the Superintendent has been controlled by the Steward and Treasurer. This charge is also proved to be erroneous. The relations between these two officers have been proved to be of the most friendly character, and the latter has served faithfully and to the entire satisfaction of the Board of Trustees.

FOOD.

Some testimony was adduced designed to show that at times the food was not of suitable quality. After a very careful examination, we are thoroughly satisfied that the patients in the hospital have an abundance of excellent food. We found upon inspection that the kitchen department is provided with a complete outfit of the most approved modern appliances for the preparation of food, and that the food of the officers and patients is prepared from the same materials, and generally in the same dish; in fact, we doubt whether the patients in the hospital do not fare much better than the average of the people in the State, so far as food is concerned.

FEMALE PHYSICIAN.

Some discussion has occurred in relation to the employment of a female physician for the female wards. We have before us a file of letters from the superintendents of sixty-six American hospitals bearing upon this subject. A summary of the letters is as follows :

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|---|----|
| Whole number of circulars sent out..... | 66 |
| Answers to same..... | 56 |
| Favoring..... | 5 |
| Opposing wholly..... | 39 |
| Opposing in part..... | 6 |
| Having experience and favoring..... | 2 |
| Having experience and opposing..... | 5 |
| Not prepared to advise..... | 6 |

Your Committee are inclined to view this subject as purely administrative, and as the trustees are always empowered to employ such officers as they think necessary to enable the Superintendent to properly conduct the affairs of the hospital, it seems to us unnecessary to legislate upon that point. The desirability of employing more medical assistants, and the determination of what particular person or persons to be employed, we consider very properly left where it is, in the hands of the Trustees.

EMPLOYING OF ATTENDANTS.

We find that in the selection of attendants, great care is exercised by the Superintendent. All applicants are required to furnish testimonials of good moral character, and generally we think the attendants in the hospital are persons of ability and worth. We are convinced by the evidence before us, that persons entering the service are not questioned as to their religious or political preferences. It is also shown that persons of all political parties are, and have been for years, in the service. It is to the credit of the political parties of Maine, that charges of this kind have not come from them; but from a very small section of another State.

LODGES.

It was charged on the part of the prosecution, that at certain times patients have been put in the lodges, and have suffered from cold. An inspection of these rooms, and of the method of heating them, will convince any reasonable person of the incorrectness of this charge. These strong rooms are designed rather for the protection of violent patients, who at times might injure themselves and other patients, than for anything that ever approaches restraint upon the person of the patient. We are satisfied that the lodge system cannot safely be abandoned for any other system of restraint in use in the hospitals of this country.

VENTILATION.

This very important subject has been the subject of examination. The apparatus for the purpose showing by the results, to be efficient. The air in the wards throughout the buildings was on every occasion where visited by members of the Committee, found to be good, and no bad odors were present.

PUBLICITY.

Friends and relatives of patients are always admitted, and the general public on all week days except Saturday. So great has been the desire of the management that the public should have the fullest knowledge of the hospital, that at times visitors have been admitted on Saturday and Sunday. Teams are often sent to trains and other places, to facilitate the visits of people who would not otherwise visit the institution.

FINANCIAL MATTERS.

Your Committee has in no instance heard of any rumors or complaints regarding the financial management of the institution. In fact, the attorney for the prosecution expressed the fullest confidence in the financial management of the hospital, and no charges having been made, your Committee will not think it necessary to examine into the financial management of the institution.

CONCLUSION.

As the result of the investigation, your Committee has reached the conclusion that the Maine Insane Hospital is an institution fully entitled to the confidence and support of the people of the State. That it is well governed, that the discipline is firm and strong, the very small number of cases of alleged abuse of patients, and this number on the evidence of persons who testified under a sense of personal enmity towards the management, and most of whom had been dismissed from the service for causes proved to be just. The trivial matter of some cases, the entire failure to prove in others, and the fact that in all cases where an offense actually occurred the offender was at once removed. All go to disprove the charge of want of proper discipline. It is a remarkable fact that, dealing as they do with many cases of acute mania, and in many instances with men endowed with maniacal strength, that it is possible to so conduct such an

institution for the twenty years over which this portion of the investigation ranged, without affording more instances of actual abuse and more material upon which to fabricate charges, the sensational articles which have appeared before and during the investigation in certain newspapers, mostly outside of the State, were probably intended to prejudice the public mind, and if possible increase the popular suspicion always attaching to such institutions. They have reacted forcibly upon public sentiment, by reason of their extravagance, and absurdity of their statements.

It is to the honor of the press of Maine, that it could disregard the advantages of sensational items and await the completion of the evidence on both sides, and the report of the Committee, before rendering a verdict which might cause far greater suffering than any charged by the enemies of the institution. Respectable newspapers can hardly afford, for a mere increase of sales, thus to assault a State institution during an investigation; but no remedy exists to prevent such outrages; public servants or private citizens, without regard to justice or propriety, may thus be injured past reparation.

The Legislature of the State has full power to protect its citizens from any species of wrong on the part of its servants, and should, also, so far as possible, protect faithful and efficient officers. It is a well known fact, that there is in this country an intense craving for novel sensations, and we suppose that in publishing such remarkable articles as have appeared, the papers attached to merely wish to increase the sale of their wares.

The conclusion of the Committee on other points are stated under their respective subjects; and we have only to add, that upon a full examination we are much pleased to find the institution fully up to the highest standard of efficiency in all its departments; and it is with feelings of pride and pleasure that we fully endorse the management of the hospital, and commend this great charge to the people of Maine. We would bespeak for it such intelligent, fostering

care at the hands of the Legislature as shall enable it to adopt such elements of progress as may enable it to bear its full share in contributing to the progress of medical practice; real practice, however, is quite different from the wild theories of speculation. It has been shown in this investigation that it is easier so to decry existing methods than to improve upon them.

It is with much pleasure that we have observed the tranquility with which the friends of patients have viewed the investigation, undisturbed by sensational reports in newspapers from other States, and undismayed by the tales of discharged servants and disappointed men, they have, almost without exception, calmly awaited the verdict of your Committee at the close of the investigation. To these friends, and to the people of Maine, your honorable bodies may unhesitatingly commend the Maine Insane Hospital as entirely worthy of their confidence and support.

All of which is very respectfully submitted.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, March 16, 1881.

Presented by Mr. PATTANGALL, from a Majority of the Committee on the Insane Hospital, laid on the table to be printed.

C. W. TILDEN, *Secretary.*