

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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THE LEGISLATURE,

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1834.

FOURTEENTH LEGISLATURE.

NO. 41.

SENATE.

STATE OF MAINE.

In Senate, Feb. 26, 1834.

The Joint Standing Committee, to whom was referred so much of the Governor's Message as relates to the establishment of an Insane Hospital, have duly considered the subject, and ask leave to Report:

That it is now four years since the attention of the Legislature was invited to the consideration of this topic by the Governor of the State in his annual message; which invitation is again repeated by the present chief magistrate, in a manner to claim the most respectful notice. These reiterated calls from the highest functionary of our government have been seconded by petitions from numerous respectable citizens in different parts of the State, and also by many communications from gentlemen of high standing, addressed to the Chairman of this,

and of a former Committee, all urging the propriety and importance of adopting such measures as shall prepare the way to the permanent establishment of an Insane Hospital, which, it is urged, the present state of society, and the deplorable condition of a large number of our fellow beings, within this State, most imperiously demand.

From a consideration of these facts, together with such as are within the personal knowledge of your Committee, it is very apparent, that there is a deep feeling excited, and widely diffused among the benevolent and humane, in behalf of those unfortunate beings, who are necessarily excluded from the pale of social life and enjoyment, in consequence of a deprivation of their reasoning faculties.

Such appeals from so many sources, ought not, and indeed *cannot* be disregarded by a legislative body, whose pride it is to extend and cherish every benevolent object presented to them, when within the range of their constitutional powers. It would be derogatory to the character of the legislators of a State, abounding as this does in a profusion of means to dispense every desired blessing to the unfortunate, not to respond to the tone of public sentiment in a matter involving the deepest sympathy for a class of human beings, whose situation is known and acknowledged by all, to be so indescribably wretched.

It is not surprising that public sentiment should at this period of time, invite legislative action upon

a subject of such magnitude and importance; but it is *more* wonderful that a feeling so honorable to human nature should have slumbered so long: especially if we look abroad upon the civilized world, and witness the united exertions of the great and good, for the last half century, to provide for the needy and unfortunate in every other condition and circumstance, which might befall them. Besides, no exertions have been wanting to devise means whereby either the intellectual or moral powers of man could be improved or his condition bettered, while the manifestations of his mind were considered vigorous and healthy; while indeed he retained capacities to aid and provide for himself. But when those powers became prostrated, from whatever cause, then it was that public sympathy must cease, and the unfortunate subject be abandoned, to the aid of those whose means were insufficient to restore, or even give relief. The unfortunate subject, though yet in the exercise of physical power, is shut out at once, from any prospect of being restored to rational enjoyment, or to participate again in any thing done under the light of the sun. For a long period of time any attempts to restore the insane to the proper exercise of their rational powers, were deemed ineffectual. Aided, however, by the researches of modern philosophers, which more clearly demonstrate the nature of the intellectual and moral powers of man; medical science is now dispelling much of the darkness which has heretofore rested upon a

subject the most abstruse and difficult. For a long time the confinement of the Insane either in Prisons or in Hospitals, was for the simple purpose of maintaining order in society, and for the preservation of property. But now the prospect of restoring the greater part to health and liberty is paramount to every other object.

With this view the philanthropists of civilized Europe, individually, and combined, have recently engaged with much ardor in new enterprises and projects, not only to lessen the sufferings peculiar to the insane; but to restore them to the enjoyment of health, of liberty, and of friends. And in every instance in a greater or lesser degree their efforts have been crowned with success. And we have many examples in our own country. The statesmen of Massachusetts and other American States, have been almost simultaneous in affording ample means, and adopting a system for the relief and restoration to health of those, who in various degrees had been deprived of their reasoning faculties. The facts exhibited in the various reports, with other information we have before us, of the success which has attended the treatment of the Insane, both in the Hospitals in Europe, and in this country, fully demonstrate their vast importance, to an enlightened and liberal community.

“Dr. Burrows stated in 1820, that of recent cases under his care, 91 in 100 recovered.

“Dr. Ellis, director of the York West-Riding Lunatic Asylum, England, stated in 1827, that of 312 patients admitted within three months of their first attack, 216 recovered. While in contrast with this he adds, that of 318 patients admitted, who had been insane from upwards of one year to thirty, only 20 recovered.

“At the Bloomingdale Asylum, New York, of 581 recent cases, 341 were discharged cured; and at the Connecticut Retreat, during the first five years, of 97 recent cases, 86 were cured.”

From these facts, any person will be enabled to appreciate the benefits of an Institution of this kind, within our own State, to which patients might be conveyed with little expense and trouble, while in the incipient stages of those mental maladies, with the almost certain prospect of a speedy cure; but without which, their case would in time become hopeless.

The Committee are not possessed of all the information necessary to ascertain the precise number of Insane persons in this State. Though from many facts furnished the Committee by Dr. Tobias Purinton of Danville, data are there found, which will prove sufficiently accurate to answer our present purpose.

That gentleman, actuated by a very commendable zeal in the cause, addressed a printed circular, in the month of August last, to every Post Master in the State, containing certain interrogatories, with

a view to ascertain the number of Insane persons, their age and sex, length of time deranged, how many in close confinement, number of idiots, &c. Returns were received, and it is presumed, quite accurate, from seventy six towns, in different and distant parts of the State, which all together, great and small, would in point of population be a fair proportion with the others in the State.

These returns give the following aggregate :

Males, 75; Females, 50; Idiots, 155. In close confinement—Males, 18; Females, 4. Insane over a year standing, 102.

Making the estimate, to ascertain the whole number in the State, upon the ratio of population contained in these seventy six towns, it will give 562 Insane, male and female.

If the computation be made upon the comparative number of towns, allowing 350 in the whole State, it will give one and six-tenths on an average to each town, which will amount in the aggregate to 560, a fraction less than by the first computation. Whence it follows there is about one to every 800 of the population throughout the State. Comparing these results with similar returns, from neighboring States, it will be seen that Maine has its full proportion of Insane persons in common with them.

It is remarked in a late treatise on Insanity, by the celebrated Dr. Spurzheim, that the number of Insane in England, in proportion to the population,

is more considerable than in other countries of Europe. In the agricultural districts of England, there is 1 to 820. And it has been observed by another writer, that had he lived to have travelled through this country, no doubt he would have found it to prevail to a still greater degree here than even in England.

And here the attention of your Committee is strongly invited to another inquiry ; and they hope it will not be deemed a departure from their duty, should they notice one of the causes, which, in their opinion, tends to produce this unfavorable result. It has frequently been observed, that the civil and religious freedom, in the ample enjoyment of which all are so justly protected under our constitution and laws, gives full latitude to the exercise of an indiscreet zeal amongst the numerous sects of christians in this country ; which if thus employed, is calculated deeply to affect those who possess a vivid imagination. And it is very manifest to common observation, that frequent and alarming appeals made to the feelings and passions of people, who are endowed by nature with a degree of sensibility highly acute, have tended very considerably to multiply the number of victims to insanity.

However deplorable the consequences that may thus follow the abuse of religious privileges, and however it may be regretted by the philanthropist, the statesman, or the rational christian, it is a state of things under our own wise form of government,

for which there is not, nor can there be, any adequate remedy by law. It is therefore safest and best to leave it to the control of public sentiment, and to the corrections of enlightened experience.

If such then are the unavoidable defects that seem to flow from the nature of our government, it would become clearly an act of wisdom in its legislators to aid in the adoption of suitable measures to mitigate their probable consequences.

Upon a subject of such vast magnitude and importance to the people of this State, your Committee have endeavored to regard all the material facts presented to them; and whilst they are decidedly of the opinion that the prayer of the petitioners ought to be granted, the necessary means to execute their designs have not been disregarded. In addition to any liberal appropriation which may be made by the State, there can be no doubt, the object would be further promoted by the aid of numerous wealthy individuals, who have long waited an opportunity of the kind to make the most munificent donations, for the promotion of a project so very humane and philanthropic. In proof of this, your Committee are happy to state, that one gentleman, every way responsible, appeared before them and offered a donation of ten thousand dollars. The proposition will undoubtedly be fulfilled whenever the State and the execution of the design shall require it. There can be no doubt this very praiseworthy example would be promptly followed by do-

nations and bequests, from many other liberal individuals, in thus subserving the great cause of humanity and benevolence.

And for the full accomplishment of so desirable an object a **R**esolve is herewith submitted.

JOSIAH PRESCOTT, *Chairman*.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD ONE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED
AND THIRTY-FOUR.

RESOLVE for establishing an Insane Hospital.

Resolved, That there be allowed and granted for the purpose of establishing an Insane Hospital in this State, the sum of twenty thousand dollars, to be derived from the proceeds of the sales of the public lands, and to be paid out of the Treasury of the State whenever said sum shall be realized and received from said source. Said sum to be expended in erecting a suitable building or buildings for an Insane Hospital in manner hereinafter provided and described, on condition that a like sum of twenty thousand dollars be raised by individual donations towards erecting and maintaining the same, within six months from the passage of an Act, in reference thereto.

Resolved, That whenever the foregoing condition shall have been complied with, the Governor with advice of Council be and he hereby is authorized and empowered to purchase a lot of land within

the State, and procure a good and sufficient title and conveyance thereof to the State, which shall be an eligible site for an Insane Hospital, regard being had in the selection of such site, to the centre of population and to the cheapness of labor and materials for the construction of said Hospital; and also to the amount of donations which may be contributed by individuals towards the erecting and establishing the same.

Resolved, That whenever a site shall have been provided as aforesaid, the Governor with advice and consent of the Council shall appoint a Board of three Commissioners, who shall cause to be erected on said site a Hospital and other buildings suitable for the accommodation of a superintendant and of one hundred lunatic persons furiously mad; agreeable to a plan of the most recent approved models for such an institution. And said Commissioners shall have power to make all necessary contracts, and to appoint Agents to superintend the erection of the same; and who shall report to the Governor and Council a system for the discipline and government of said establishment, as soon as the same shall be completed. And said Commissioners shall lay before the Governor and Council their accounts of expenditures and disbursements for the purpose of their being examined, audited and allowed, as in their discretion they may deem just and proper.

Resolved, That the Treasurer of this State be authorized to receive any donation either in money,

securities, or in any Real or other personal Estate from any person or persons, which shall be appropriated exclusively to the object aforesaid. And that it shall be the duty of said Treasurer to keep a distinct and separate account thereof, to be appropriated as aforesaid under the order and direction of the Governor and Council.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, February 26, 1834.

ORDERED, That three hundred copies of the foregoing Report and Resolves be printed for the use of the Legislature.

[Extract from the Journal.]

Attest, WILLIAM TRAFTON, *Secretary*.