

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1845.

AUGUSTA:

WM. T. JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE STATE.

1845.

TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE.

No. 30.]

[SENATE.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON THE INSANE HOSPITAL.

A. D. 1845.

Your committee, to whom was referred the report of the Trustees, Treasurer and Superintendent of the Insane Hospital, have had the same under consideration and ask leave to report, that we consider this institution an honor to the State and a monument of the philanthropy of individual donors and of the high interest that the Legislature of this State has taken in the cause of suffering humanity.

From the report of the Trustees made at their last annual visit, we learn that the whole number of patients was eighty-one, fifty of whom were males and thirty-one females. Four of this number are supported by the State, and the trustees recommend that an appropriation of three hundred dollars be made by the State for their support the past year, as with this provision the institution can sustain itself the ensuing year without further aid from the State; and for that purpose your committee have reported a resolve in favor of the Insane Hospital for the aforesaid sum of \$300.

Your committee learn from the Treasurer's report that there was due to that institution for the support of patients from towns and

individuals, Nov. 30th, 1844, the sum of \$3,334.40, and also the sum of \$53.06 cash in the treasury: that the income of the farm belonging to the institution, the past year amounted to the sum of \$822.44, and that the improvements of the farm are progressive.

Your committee also learn from the report of the Superintendent, that one hundred and fifty-one persons have enjoyed the advantages of this institution the past year, and that seventy-five have been discharged therefrom during said time, thirty of whom have recovered and eleven more improved.

Your committee have perused the report of the Superintendent with much interest, and consider it a highly interesting and valuable document, worthy the high reputation of its distinguished author; and we cheerfully recommend it to the consideration of the friends of humanity.

Your committee are happy to say that the management of this institution during the past year under the superintendence of Dr. Ray, meets our cordial approbation. His humane and efficient labors, united with the kind attentions of all the other officers of the institution, to the unfortunate insane, have exerted a salutary influence in soothing the troubled spirit of the sufferer.

Our official visit to this institution the past winter was highly gratifying. The order, cleanliness and comfort apparent in every apartment of the building and the various innocent amusements enjoyed by the patients, so well calculated to divert the mind from its melancholy musings, could but awaken in our hearts sensations of gratitude and thanksgiving "to the giver of every good and perfect gift," that an institution so creditable to humanity should have a location in the bosom of our own State. Yet your committee would respectfully represent that comparatively but few of the insane in this State enjoy the benefit of this institution. From partial returns made to the Trustees it appears that upwards of six hundred cases of insanity exist in this State, and that not more than one in eight seek relief in this asylum for the afflicted. This to your committee is a subject of much regret, as they have no doubt that in many cases which have terminated in confirmed insanity, the patient might have been cured had he been committed to this Hospital in the first stages of the disease.

It is obvious to your committee that it was the object of the founders of this institution that the poor as well as the more able should enjoy its blessings; and it is apparent that this object has not been attained, owing to the great expense of board. The poor are unable to maintain their friends at the expense of two dollars per week, nor are towns willing to pay that sum for the support of insane paupers, so long as they can be maintained at home at a cost not exceeding one dollar per week. Hence it is that so few of the poor enjoy the blessings of this institution.

From the foregoing considerations your committee would recommend that provision be made for the support of poor insane persons at this institution at a charge not exceeding one dollar per week for board of females and one dollar and twenty-five cents for males. Under such an arrangement, as many patients would seek relief in this institution as the building could accommodate. And your committee are satisfied that an increase of patients would necessarily lessen the expense of board, and that the prices above named would nearly if not quite cover the charges for their support.

Your committee would call the attention of the Legislature to the importance of making suitable provision for the support of insane criminals at this institution.

We learn from the report of the Prison Discipline Society, published in Boston, Mass., for the year A. D. 1844, that the attention of the Legislature of that State has been called to this subject, and that on investigation it has been found that in many cases persons have been convicted of crime for acts committed under the influence of insanity, and that many an insane person has been confined in a solitary cell year after year, deprived of medical aid, without the blessings of friendship to cheer him in his lone dungeon excluded from the light of heaven, and not even permitted to breathe the pure air so essential to the sustenance of animal life.

Among the various institutions in the United States supported by public and private charity, none has stronger claims to the consideration of the humane than the institution erected for the purpose of restoring reason to the insane. Institutions erected for the deaf,

dumb and blind are indeed worthy of the support of the philanthropist and the christian. Miracles have been performed under the untiring efforts of the patrons of these institutions. The eyes of the blind have been opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, and the voice of the dumb is heard in songs of rejoicing; minds that long slumbered in the blackness of darkness have awoke into happy consciousness; new light has beamed upon the mental vision; the beautiful fields of science are opened to their investigation, and mind holds communion with fellow mind.

But it is the province of this institution to cast out devils, to restore reason to its throne and the sufferer to his friends and society "clothed and in his right mind."

Massachusetts has provided by law for the removal of the poor insane convict, not only from the county jails, but also from the State prison, to the Insane Hospital at Worcester, where he can enjoy the blessings of that institution.

The Inspectors of the State Prison at Charlestown, Mass., say in their last report, "that Earnest A. Irving was committed to that prison in September, A. D. 1836 for the crime of larceny, having been sentenced to three days solitary imprisonment and to ten years hard labor." "In the month of August, 1837, he was placed in one of the cells in the old prison, where he has been imprisoned until the present time, being considered a dangerous man to be at large on account of insanity."

Here was a child of misfortune who probably committed the larceny for which he was sent to the State prison under the influence of partial insanity, and who for seven long years has been confined in a solitary cell and has become a confirmed maniac. The iron has entered his soul and reason is fled forever. This is one of several cases of a similar nature referred to in said report.

The Directors of the Connecticut State prison in their report for May, 1843, allude to the unfortunate Rabello. They remark that this poor lunatic was committed to the State prison in 1837, for safe keeping, having previously been arraigned for the murder of a boy, but acquitted in consequence of insanity so fully proved as not to admit of a doubt. This poor unfortunate foreigner was con-

fined in a solitary cell for six long years; and the directors justly remark, "to be bereft of reason is a calamity which should enlist our sympathies, instead of incarcerating such subjects in a penitentiary appropriate to felons, where bolting of bars and every movement in connection with the discipline, being averse to their repose, tends consequently to increase the malady and prevent their recovery."

Your committee are happy to notice a general awakening in several States in the Union to the importance of visiting the poor prisoner in the prison house and of examining into the cases of mental derangement and providing means for the comfort and recovery of the suffering sons and daughters of insanity.

With a view to the amelioration of the condition of this class of the unfortunate insane we would recommend that a committee be appointed by the Governor and Council to ascertain facts in relation to the number and condition of insane convicts in the several county jails in this State, and also the State prison, together with the number of insane persons in the State, and to report to the next Legislature.

All which is respectfully submitted.

JOSEPH BARRETT, *Chairman.*

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, March 21, 1845.

ORDERED, That 1,000 copies of this report be printed for the use of the Legislature.

J. O. L. FOSTER, *Secretary.*