

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE.

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FORTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE.

HOUSE.

No. 124.

The Joint Standing Committee on the Insane Hospital, have made several visits to that Institution during the present session of the Legislature, for the purpose of ascertaining the condition of the inmates, their necessities and wants, if any, the general condition of the Institution, and its general management.

The Committee have been through every hall and dormitory, in both male and female departments from the basement to the attic. Many of the patients are found to be idiotic, demented, or so divested of their reason as to render it very difficult to keep them clean and the atmosphere of their apartments from being offensive. But with the exception of one or two of the lower halls in the male department, and one in the female wing, which could be improved by a little more thorough ventilation, there was an appearance of neatness throughout the Institution that reflects credit upon the Superintendent and his subordinates.

The water-closets are so arranged that water can be let on by turning a faucet, so as to keep them clean, and prevent the accumulation of bad air in the apartments, as is too often found in establishments of this kind. There is a bathing-room attached to each hall, connected with the water closet, with a bathing tub so arranged as to take the water, after it has been used for bathing to cleanse the viaducts of the water-closets, by letting it run through them on its way to the common sewer. The bathing of the patients, once or twice a week, as circumstances may require, is of great importance to them, in a sanitary point of view, as well as important to aid other means employed to restore them to a sane and healthy condition.

It is understood to be one of the rules of the institution that patients must bathe or be bathed, at least once a week, whether they are willing or not. In the opinion of the Committee, this is

right, and the Superintendent should be sustained in enforcing this rule, by all proper and reasonable means, as the health and comfort of the patients and welfare of the Institution require it. If they were allowed to resist the efforts of the attendants to keep them clean, they would soon get to be so filthy that the odor emanating from their person would contaminate the atmosphere of their apartments, generate vermin and give rise to loathsome cutaneous diseases.

The beds are well arranged for the comfort and health of the patients. The bedsteads are of iron, fastened firmly to the floor of the dormitories, with screws, passing through a flange attached to the feet of the bedstead, which renders them firm and steady, and not liable to be thrown into confusion by the inmates. Besides, they do not afford hiding places, like wooden bedsteads, for unwelcome occupants. A firm tick of straw, well filled, covered in most cases, by a hair mattress, with sheets, and a sufficient covering to keep them warm and comfortable in the coldest weather. The halls and dormitories are warmed by means of hot steam passing through iron pipes, of about one and a half inches in diameter, distributed throughout the establishment, and so arranged that the heat can be shut off or let on, as the comfort of the patients may require. The temperature of the different apartments is regulated by a thermometer, permanently fastened to the side of the wall of each large hall, boxed in, so as to protect it from injury by the patients. There is an opening hole through the box sufficiently large to enable the attendant to notice the indications and regulate the temperature, which is kept usually at about 70 degrees. The clothing of the patients is, in most cases, somewhat coarse and rough, but tidy and comfortable, so far as warmth is concerned when indoors.

The male patients are required to be kept shaved and their hair cut occasionally, which is necessary to present a decent appearance, and prevent, somewhat, the liability to vermin.

The food is plain, but of good quality and wholesome, such as fresh and corned beef, mutton, pork, fish, beans, and all the ordinary kinds of vegetables—good bread made of flour, good brown bread, butter and tea. On one occasion, some butter was found on inspection to be not as *fresh* as would be desired by an epicure. The taste, however, was not *quite* as objectionable as was indicated by the odor. But it is well known to those who have occasion to use large quantities of butter, that it is not always possible

to obtain it fresh and sweet, and keep it so for any considerable length of time. The butter alluded to may have been an exception to the general rule, and probably will not occur again if it can be avoided.

The cooking is done, mostly by steam, in large tubs and copper boilers, which is a very thorough, expeditious and economical manner of cooking. There are several of these tubs and boilers, which enables the cooks to carry on several branches or kinds of cooking at the same time, without delaying or interfering with each other. They make doughnuts, pies, sweet cakes, common flour biscuit, and many other varieties, as a change for the patients and attendants, all of whom, including the Superintendent and family, are served from the same common stores and cook-room.

On the whole, the Committee consider the food, as a general thing, of good quality, well cooked, and in sufficient quantity. Near by is an ice-house, well filled with ice, for the benefit of the inmates of the Institution, which is a great luxury in warm weather. Besides, it enables the Steward to keep fresh meat for the patients much longer in the warm season.

There are some ten or twelve rooms in the male and female departments, fitted up with carpets and furniture very comfortably, for private patients, whose friends are able and prefer to pay all their expenses, for the sake of having them kept quiet and away from the excitement of other excitable patients. If there were *more* of these private rooms, it might be better for the Institution, as there would be enough to occupy them, and which would pay a better income to the Hospital than the same number of common patients, or patients kept in the common way.

For the want of more of these private rooms, patients are taken to similar Institutions out of the State, depriving the State of whatever benefit might accrue by accommodating them at home, and subjecting their friends to a greater expense and trouble by being obliged to transport and support them at so much greater distance from home.

The buildings and furniture appear to be in a good state of repair, and will need no appropriation on that account, so far as is known to the Committee, except the building used as a *laundry*, which is a part of an old edifice, built of bricks, years ago, for another purpose, a part of which was removed to make room for the last new wing. The remaining portion is getting old and dilapi-

dated, and is not sufficiently capacious to accommodate so large an Institution.

A good washing and ironing establishment is a very important and necessary appendage to such an Institution, as imperfectly dried and ironed bed and other clothing is very productive of colds, coughs, rheumatism, fevers, consumption, and various other diseases.

It has been estimated that four thousand dollars would be sufficient with which to erect a good and suitable building for washing, heating and drying purposes, and furnish all the pipes and drying apparatus. The Committee, therefore, are unanimous in recommending an appropriation by this Legislature of four thousand dollars for the purpose of erecting and fitting up a suitable building for that purpose.

In regard to an additional wing for the accommodation of male patients, as suggested by the Trustees and Superintendent in their report, the crowded condition of that part of the Institution seems to call for some appropriation for that purpose. It takes two years to complete such a building from its commencement. This, however, the Committee offer merely as a suggestion for the consideration of the Legislature.

In conclusion, the Committee are of the opinion that, according to the best of our knowledge, the condition of the inmates, and the present management of the Institution by the Superintendent, is as good as can reasonably be expected under all the circumstances.

The charges of abuse and cruelty to the patient, and mismanagement of the Insane Hospital, alleged to have occurred some eight or nine years ago, followed by a long list of petitioners for an investigation and removal of the present officials of that Institution, and which was referred to this Committee for investigation, is herewith respectfully returned to the House without report thereon, for the reason that the Committee feel that, *pending* that investigation, the action of the House has relieved them of their duty on that subject by appointing a *special commission* for that purpose.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

N. P. MONROE,

Chairman on the part of the House.

STATE OF MAINE.

RESOLVE in favor of the insane hospital.

Resolved, That there be appropriated and paid out of
2 the state treasury, the sum of four thousand dollars, to
3 be expended under the superintendence and direction
4 of the trustees of the insane hospital, for the purpose
5 of erecting a suitable building for a laundry and fitting
6 it up in a complete and thorough manner.

STATE OF MAINE.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
February 26, 1867. }

Laid on the table and ordered to be printed on motion of Mr.
MONROE.

FRANKLIN M. DREW, Clerk. .