

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIFTY-FIFTH LÉGISLATURE.

HOUSE.

No. 48.

To the Legislature of Maine :

By a Resolve approved February 24, 1875, the " Governor was authorized to appoint a Committee whose duty should be to consider what measures should be adopted to provide suitable additional accommodations for the insane, and in furtherance of this end if they should consider it advisable to purchase the United States Marine Hospital near Portland, or if they should not deem this advisable, to select a suitable location for a new Insane Hospital, and report to the next Legislature."

The undersigned were appointed such Committee, and pursuant to the requirements of said resolve submit the following report :

We found it impracticable to ascertain with accuracy the number of insane persons in the State. The census of 1860 makes the number 794, and that of 1870 puts the number at 792 ; but those who have given the question careful examination estimate the number as high as 1,200, or even more. From the best information we can obtain, we think 1,200 approximates very nearly to the whole number that can properly be included in the class of insane persons.

The Hospital cannot properly accommodate more than 400 patients ; and if our estimates are correct there remain twice that number unable to obtain hospital accommodations. That some provision should be made for this large class, seems too obvious to require argument.

The law of 1874, providing for the discharge from the hospital of such inmates as in the judgment of the Superintendent were " beyond cure," and could be discharged with safety to the patient and the public, operated to discharge about sixty inmates, and greatly relieved the hospital, and we learn from the report of the trustees of the hospital that the exclusion of this class has so

checked the increase of admissions that the present accommodations are sufficient for the class which would be improved or cured by hospital treatment.

We think these facts strongly tend to prove that much the larger number of insane belong to the harmless, idiotic and imbecile class, and that the number who fall within the curable class, and require hospital treatment, does not exceed the present capacity of the hospital. We are strengthened in this conclusion by the reports of the Trustees and Superintendent of the hospital made at the close of last year. This brings us the consideration of what provision should be made for the incurable, harmless insane.

It would seem to be apparent that this class could not require the same medical skill, large number of attendants, and costly accommodations and appliances that the acute and curable insane need. But we are aware that it is held by high authority in the treatment of the insane, that the interests of each class require that they be kept in the same institution and under the same general management. We do not presume to decide the question. We regard it as one of great practical consequence, and deserving of very careful consideration. We deem it proper to call attention to the fact, that it is held by many who have given the question much examination, that it is desirable to separate the acute and curable insane from the incurable and harmless, maintaining that the incurable, harmless insane need *not a hospital*, but a home, with suitable exercise, plenty of sunlight, pure air, proper nourishment, and that these can be furnished at much less expense than by large, costly hospitals, with expensive medical supervision and other attendance.

We are referred to the States of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, both of which have established within a few years permanent asylums for the incurable insane.

In the Massachusetts asylum, within the eight years of its history, more than one thousand chronic insane have been admitted, mostly from the State hospitals. It is reported that nearly one hundred of these have recovered or improved, not from medication, but from work on the farm. And in the opinion of good judges, the condition of the inmates there has been made as comfortable as it was before their admission, and the experiment, as a whole, has been regarded as a decided success. The expenses

have averaged for each inmate a little more than one hundred dollars a year. The average number being 300, with a saving to the State of about \$25,000 a year.

In Rhode Island the asylum for the incurable insane is located upon a farm in the town of Cranston. The buildings are only one story, well lighted and ventilated, with large yards and plenty of ground for cultivation. The cost of supporting the insane here is only about two dollars a week.

The only other hospital in the State is the Butler Hospital, which is regarded as one of the best conducted, as it is one of the oldest hospitals for the insane in the country. The trustees of this hospital report that by the removal of chronic cases "the capacity of the hospital is enlarged for the treatment of recent cases of insanity, and the effect is thereby to increase its beneficial agency as a curative institution." And Dr. Nathan Allen, late commissioner of lunacy in Massachusetts, who has given great attention to the subject, says of this asylum at Cranston, there is only one opinion among the friends of the insane in the State who have looked at the subject, that it presents a great improvement over the old order of things, and adds, "from a careful personal inspection I can say, that it is of the kind, a model institution *and worthy of imitation in every other State.*"

In the light, and with the result of these experiments before us, we did not deem it advisable to "select a location for a new Insane Hospital." It seemed proper that the policy of the State in the treatment of the incurable, harmless insane should be definitely settled before proceeding to make further provision for them by the erection of a new hospital.

If it shall be determined to keep them in a general hospital with the curable, it will then be necessary to erect a hospital with all the appliances for the treatment of the various class of cases; if on the other hand the State should adopt the plan of Rhode Island, quite different provisions would be required, and the experiment could be made at a comparatively small cost. It is proper to add, that with our present information we favor the Rhode Island plan.

We gave the United States Marine Hospital, near Portland, a careful examination, but in our opinion it would require such material alterations and repairs, that it would be inexpedient to purchase it for the use of the insane. We also found that no officer of the

government had authority to sell it, and that an Act of Congress would be required for that purpose.

S. D. LINDSEY,
H. N. JOSE,
C. H. B. WOODBURY.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
January 31, 1876. }

Report of Commissioners on New Insane Hospital. On motion of Mr. BALLARD of Augusta, laid on the table, ordered printed, and referred to the Committee on Insane Hospital.

ORAMANDAL SMITH, *Clerk.*