

Communication to His Excellency the Governor : in accordance with a resolution passed by the General Assembly soliciting information in reference to the indigent insane / report of the Superintendent of the Retreat for the Insane.

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Report of the Superintendent of the Retreat for the Insane.

COMMUNICATION

TO

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR,

IN ACCORDANCE WITH A

RESOLUTION

PASSED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SOLICITING INFORMATION IN REFERENCE TO THE

INDIGENT INSANE.

Published by Order of the Legislature.

HARTFORD:
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LETTER.

HIS EXCELLENCY GOV. BUCKINGHAM,

DEAR SIR,—Your letter containing sundry interrogatories in regard to this Institution, and enclosing a copy of the Resolution passed by the General Assembly asking for information respecting the indigent Insane, &c., is before me.

Permit me to answer those enquiries not in the order in which they are presented, but in a manner which seems to me best adapted to convey the desired information.

The Retreat is a charity. It originated in the laudable and disinterested zeal of individuals. It is controlled by an Association of Gentlemen, without distinction of party or sect, called "The Society for the Relief of the Insane," which appoint a Board of Directors, to whom the general management of the Institution is confided. An Act of incorporation and a grant of \$5,000 was obtained from the State in 1822, together with a "Brief," permitting contributions in the churches for five years; from this last source nothing was ever obtained. Donations of over \$18,000 were at the same time received from private individuals. Some years afterwards a lottery was also granted by the State.

When, in 1845, a movement was made by the State to provide more ample accommodations for its indigent Insane, the Directors of the Retreat came forward and with great liberality voted to expend a sum of \$30,000, which they had carefully accumulated; together with a legacy of \$5,000, which they had just received from the estate of Israel Mun-

son, Esq., of Boston, in the erection and furnishing of new buildings, provided the State would, on its part, make suitable appropriations for the *support* of that unfortunate class at the Retreat.

This sum being found insufficient to finish and furnish the one hundred additional rooms which the new buildings contained, the State made a donation of \$5,000. In 1853, the State made a grant of \$8,000, and in 1855, another of \$6,000, to aid in the erection of new and improved buildings, to take the place of the old lodges.

The whole amount of money, therefore, which the Institution has received from the State since 1823, amounts to only \$24,000. It should be fully understood, however, that the appropriations for the relief of the indigent Insane can in no manner be considered, directly or indirectly, as donations to the Retreat. The first appropriation for this last purpose under the present arrangement, was made in 1842, of \$2,000 a year, and was then coupled with the restriction that the Retreat should receive these patients at \$2.50 per week! This appropriation has been increased from time to time, until it stands, without this restriction, at its present amount, \$7,000 per annum. This sum passes into the hands of the Executive of the State, as "Commissioner of the Fund." He dispenses it to applicants at his good discretion, according to the need of each. The Institution receives the Governor's orders on the treasury as cash toward the payment of the board of such patients. No distinction whatever is made in the Institution between persons thus aided and others who pay us the same rate of board from their own means. This fund, therefore, is a simple charity to the indigent, and in no way a benefit to the Institution, excepting in extending its sphere of usefulness. In order that we may measure more accurately the wisdom and good economy of this arrangement with the Retreat on the part of the State, let us look for a moment at some of the Lunatic Hospitals around us,

which are built and sustained by their respective States, and I think you will be surprised at the result. I select those whose arrangement and position are such that they present the fairest comparison.

The neighboring State of Massachusetts has three State Hospitals. One at Worcester, containing about 300 patients, has cost for its erection, \$200,000; the State pays the salaries of its principal officers annually, and charges \$3.00 per week for each patient for the first six months, and \$2.75 per week afterwards.

The one at Taunton which was built next, has accommodations for 300 patients, has cost \$214,000, pays the same salaries and charges the same rate of board as at the Worcester Hospital. The one last erected at Northampton, containing all the modern improvements, has cost \$315,000. Here the State pays the salaries and charges \$3.00 per week for the first six months and \$2.50 afterwards.

In these Institutions, no allowance is made for the clothing of the "State Paupers," (principally Irish and other foreigners,) for whom the Hospitals supply cheap dresses. This, in Massachusetts, is a distinct class from the native indigent Insane, supported by towns and counties. Thus Massachusetts, for its three Hospitals containing accommodations for about 900 patients, has made a permanent investment of over \$729,000!—pays annually towards the salaries of their officers, \$8,925, and charges \$3.00 per week for board for the first six months, and from \$2.50 to \$2.75 per week afterwards! The New York State Lunatic Hospital at Utica, built to accommodate 450 patients, has cost for its erection and furnishing, \$588,738. In addition to this, \$68,742 was expended last year in the reconstruction of the center building and other parts of the Hospital destroyed by fire, making the whole amount invested by the State for construction, repairs, &c., \$657,480. The State pays \$6,900 for the salaries of its principal officers,

and charges \$3.00 per week for the indigent patients, with extra charges for clothing, damages, &c.

In all these Institutions the State is liable for any deficiency of income, accidental expenses, and all other contingencies.

Add to the amount expended in Massachusetts for the construction, &c. of the three Hospitals, the amount represented by the annual appropriation for salaries, considered as interest, and we have a preliminary expenditure by the State, equal to the permanent investment in buildings, &c., of \$1,000 for each patient; their charge for board after all this for each of their patients being but a little less than our own.

Add in the same manner to the amount expended by the State of New York, at the Utica Hospital, the amount paid for salaries, and you have a permanent investment of over \$1600 for each patient, their rate of board for each being precisely the same as our own!

Such broad charity, such munificent liberality in these great and leading States, is a good illustration of the principle that the extent and perfection of the Lunatic Hospital is a good measure of the high civilization of the community in which it exists.

The Retreat for the Insane, with accommodations for 220 patients, furnishes the building, pays insurance, makes repairs and improvements, (averaging two or three thousand dollars every year,) assumes all responsibilities for deficiencies and contingent expenses, pays its officers, furnishes to all its inmates the superior accommodations of a first class Institution in the large number of attendants and other facilities of treatment, and has received from the State of Connecticut in thirty-four years, \$24,000!

The contrast is striking and suggestive.

It may be well to add, that we furnish board, washing, ironing, mending, medical attendance, medicine, nursing, (averaging one attendant to seven or eight patients,) heat

and ventilate the house, employ a chaplain, furnish large libraries, carriages and horses, and ornamental grounds for recreation and amusements, and decorate the rooms with engravings, for \$3.00 per week, for patients from the State of Connecticut!

The average cost of supporting each patient at the Retreat for the year ending April 1st, 1857, was \$3.53; for the year ending April 1st, 1856, it was \$3.81; and for the year ending April 1st, 1855, it was \$3.89. The average cost of supporting each patient for the five years preceding April 1st, 1857, was \$3.75 per week.

On the 1st of January, 1859, the whole number of patients in the Institution was 226, of whom 182 were from Connecticut, and forty-four from without the State. During the year about four-fifths of the patients have come from the State of Connecticut. It should, however, be stated in this connection, that in consequence of the crowded state of the Institution, a large number of applicants from other States have been refused; (though our rates of charge for persons out of the State are at least \$1.00 per week higher than for residents of the State,) preference being given in all cases, with the exception of here and there an extreme case, to residents of Connecticut, over those from without the State. Our ability, therefore, to sustain the Institution, depends, not upon our income from any reserved fund, not upon the donations of the State, nor from its charitable liberality to the indigent Insane, but upon the wise and economical management of the income derived mainly, from those patients who are attracted to the Retreat and who are willing to pay liberally for the comforts and privileges which its excellent arrangements afford them.

The Directors of the Retreat, as such, receive no compensation. The whole amount paid to the three Managers, the Treasurer, and the six Medical Visitors, is \$310 per annum, being all that is paid for any service rendered outside of the Institution. The Chairman of the Board of Managers

receives \$100, and each of the others receive \$50 per annum.

The Treasurer, for receiving, disbursing, collecting, &c., &c., &c., over \$50,000 per annum, is paid \$50 for his services. The six Medical Visitors are paid \$10 each, being less generally than the traveling expenses of those residing out of the city. The whole amount being far less than any responsible clerk would charge to perform the duties of Treasurer, to say nothing of the responsible and often laborious duties of the other officers. Two or more of the Medical Visitors inspect the Institution at least once a month; the Chairman of the Board of Managers is a frequent and a thorough visitor. These gentlemen undoubtedly feel themselves richly compensated for their time and attention, by a consciousness of the assistance they render the officers, and the benefits they are conferring upon their suffering fellow men. I can not here refrain from the remark, in justice to all who are directly or indirectly associated with me, that the line of duties laid down in the "By-laws," or "Rules" of the Institution, is a very inadequate measure of the services they render to the patients.

In regard to the appropriation of any surplus funds which may have remained after paying the current expenses of the Institution, I am able to give a very satisfactory answer. While, since 1853, the Institution has received from the State, (as previously stated,) \$14,000 towards the erection of new and improved buildings to take the place of the old lodges, it has found it necessary to expend in finishing those buildings and in erecting the new laundry, nearly an equal amount.

Those two buildings alone, with their furniture, apparatus for heating, &c., having cost over \$22,000.

By reference to our annual reports, you will see that independent of all this expenditure, our repairs and improvements form an important item of our annual expenses.

The policy of the Institution is strictly in conformity

with those principles of benevolence upon which it was founded,—to expend any excess of income in such improvements as tend to promote the happiness and welfare of our inmates, or which have been rendered by the progress of the times, absolutely necessary to maintain our relative standing with the other Institutions of the country.

I have said the Retreat was a Charity,—it is a noble one. Let us see what results it has effected in thirty-five years, and how those results have been obtained, that we may rightly estimate the facts upon which this claim is based.

During thirty-five years ending April 1st, 1859, it has received within its walls 3407 insane persons. Of these, 3192 have been discharged. Of those discharged, 347 have died, and 1643, (or 58 per cent. of those remaining under treatment, deducting the deaths,) have recovered.

This large number have been restored to the blessings of a sound mind and to their friends; or, in the narrow language of political economy, have been restored to society as producers instead of consumers.

We can present the full measure of such results when some statistician, (as Sterne has painted the misery of a solitary captive,) shall take a single case of acute mania, watch it through the weary weeks of doubtful remedial treatment, and then when it is freed from the bondage of this dreadful disease, follow it home, and, as clothed in its right mind it goes back to life and its blessings, give us these results in words or figures!

But the number of recoveries does not by any means embrace all that has been accomplished.

Very many of the large class discharged as more or less improved, have received benefits little less in importance to themselves and friends, than that of entire restoration.

They have taken with them in addition to the improvement of their general health, a far greater ability to take care of themselves, to control their impulses, and to make a better use of their remaining powers of body and of mind.

If patients can not be restored to reason, it is something to have acquired habits of cleanliness and decency, of peacefulness and industry.

After the endowments which gave existence to the Institution, as I have remarked in the thirtieth Report, while a sincere and most kindly sympathy with its great object has pervaded the community, the Retreat has been suffered to go on, almost single-handed and alone, in its great work of an elevated and self-rewarded benevolence, making many rich in health and happiness, endowing many a happy home with that wealth which is the "crown of the wise," it has had all the while to contend with narrow means, and, as I have shown, mainly derived from its own meagre income, to contend in the race of usefulness and excellence, with other Institutions which have been more liberally sustained, either from the treasuries of their respective States, or by private beneficence. The Institution and the public connected with it, owe these results to the blessing of Providence mainly upon the efforts of the sagacious, earnest, and philanthropic men, to whom has been confided the direction of its concerns.

In presenting to you this brief history of the origin and progress of the Institution over which I have the honor to preside, I have endeavored to answer your enquiries, fully and without the least reserve. I trust my statement is sufficiently explicit to enable all to judge, how far the Retreat is sustained by State appropriations, and how far, by the good management of its Directors, and by a spirit of Christian philanthropy.

I remain with sentiments of great respect, very truly
yours,

JOHN S. BUTLER,
Superintendent, &c.

RETREAT FOR THE INSANE,
HARTFORD, March 31st, 1859.

