

First report from the Committee on the State of Madhouses.

Contributors

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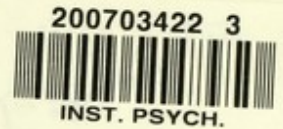
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FIRST REPORT.



THE COMMITTEE appointed to consider of Provision being made for the better Regulation of MADHOUSES in *England*, and to report the same, with their Observations thereupon, to The House; and who were empowered to report the MINUTES of the EVIDENCE taken before them from time to time;—HAVE, pursuant to the Order of The House, considered the Matter to them referred, and agreed upon the following REPORT:—

YOUR Committee, deeply sensible of the importance of the Matter referred to their consideration, have applied themselves with great earnestness to the performance of the duty imposed on them by the House.

The Evidence presented herewith, will show how extensive their inquiries have been. It was their intention to make Observations in detail on the several Heads of the Examination taken before them, and on the several public and private Establishments, for the reception of Insane Persons; but on reconsidering the whole subject, they have thought it advisable, in the first instance, to make their Report more general, for the reasons which will be stated.

Your Committee cannot however hesitate to suggest, with the utmost confidence, from the Evidence they now offer to the House, that some new provision of law is indispensably necessary for insuring better care being taken of Insane Persons, both in *England* and *Ireland*, than they have hitherto experienced; the number of whom appear to be very considerable; as the inquiries of the Committee have convinced them, that there are not in the Country a set of Beings more immediately requiring the protection of the Legislature than the persons in this state; a very large proportion of whom are entirely neglected by their relations and friends. If the treatment of those in the middling or in the lower classes of life, shut up in hospitals, private madhouses, or parish workhouses, is looked at, Your Committee are persuaded that a case cannot be found where the necessity for a remedy is more urgent.

See Evidence,
pp. 11. 41. 112. 124.

It will appear on reference to the Evidence (relying principally on the testimony of the persons keeping the houses), that in a few of them, the arrangement is as good as the contracted size of the houses, and the small extent of the ground attached to them, will admit; and that the treatment of the inhabitants in them has been kind and proper;—but it is in proof, that there is just and great cause of complaint against by far the greater part of the houses of this description, which have hardly, in any instance, been built for the purpose, and are incapable of being conveniently adapted to it.

See Evidence,
pp. 21. 49. 121.

Your Committee have classed their Observations under the following Heads, that each may be referred to as the occasion may arise:—

Ist.—Keepers of the Houses receiving a much greater number of persons in them than they are calculated for; and the consequent want of accommodation for the Patients, which greatly retards recovery; they are, indeed, represented by the President of the College of Physicians, and the Physician acting as Secretary to the visiting Commissioners, who must be considered as the most competent judges on the subject, to be better calculated for the imprisonment than the cure of patients.

See Evidence,
pp. 18. 25. 26. 27.
28. 31. 32. 44. 48.
79. 91. 107. 110.

See Evidence,
pp. 76. 111.

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Evidence, pp. 12.
19. 26. 44. 60. 62.
78. 96. 107. 110.
127.

See Evidence,
pp. 11. 16. 25. 27.
31. 34. 35. 36. 40.
76. 77. 79. 91. 107.
125. 129.

See Evidence,
pp. 15. 23. 26. 29.
35. 37. 38. 39. 42.
46. 53. 59. 82. 91.
93. 95. 107. 110.
112. 123. 127.

See Evidence, p. 28.
p. 188 to 192.

See Evidence,
pp. 9. 12. 14. 26.
32. 34. 38. 51. 52.
62 to 67. 82 to 91.
95. 97. 107. 113.
125.

See Evidence,
pp. 11. 18. 20. 22,
23. 54. 55 to 57.
114. 122. 124.

See Evidence,
pp. 19. 24.

See Evidence,
pp. 51. 68. 92. 108,
109.

See Evidence,
pp. 9. 20. 43. 47.
67. 68. 81. 107.
112. 121.

See Evidence,
pp. 107. 112.

See Evidence,
p. 70.

See pp. 24. 181.

IIIdly.—The insufficiency of the number of Keepers, in proportion to the number of persons intrusted to their care, which unavoidably leads to a proportionably greater degree of restraint than the Patients would otherwise be under.

IIIIdly.—The mixing Patients who are outrageous, with those who are quiet and inoffensive; and those who are insensible to the calls of nature, with others who are cleanly.

IVthly.—The want of medical assistance, *as applied to the malady* for which the persons are confined; a point worthy of the most serious attention, as the practice very generally is to confine medical aid to corporeal complaints; which circumstance the Committee are the more desirous of enforcing on The House, as an opinion has been given, by a respectable Physician and another person of great experience, that where the mental faculties are only partially affected (stated by them to be so in seven-eighths of the cases), medical assistance is of the highest importance.

Vthly.—Restraint of persons much beyond what is necessary, certainly retarding recovery, even beyond what is occasioned by the crowded state of the house; of which many instances were stated to the Committee. In the course of the Evidence there will be found opinions unfavourable to the use of strait waistcoats, as more oppressive to the Patient even than irons; which induce Your Committee to observe, that a waistcoat has been invented, under the view of one of the Members of it, which appears likely to be quite as secure as the one now in use, and infinitely less distressing to the wearer.

VIthly.—The situation of the parish paupers in some of the houses for Insane Persons; respecting the care of whom, when confined in parochial workhouses, the committee also made some inquiries, as connected with the matter before them, although not expressly included in the reference to them.

VIIthly.—Detentions of persons, the state of whose minds did not require confinement:—On this ground of complaint, Your Committee had very slender means of information.

VIIIthly.—Insufficiency of certificates on which Patients are received into the madhouses.

IXthly.—The defective visitation of private Madhouses, under the provisions of the 14 Geo. III. c. 49.

THE references are made by Your Committee to the pages of the Evidence, to show, with as little trouble as possible to the reader, what has been said respecting each. On consideration of which, Your Committee are persuaded, that no doubt will be entertained of the insufficiency of the visitation which has taken place, even within the limits of the district assigned to the care of the College of Physicians, from the professional occupations of the visitors not allowing them sufficient time to perform the duties required; and still less doubt will probably remain, of the utter sufficiency or total neglect of those duties in other parts of England. It follows of course, that some amendment of the law is requisite for this part of the subject.

Your Committee cannot resist observing also, that the Commissioners have not the power of withholding a new licence to a person deprived of one for the most flagitious conduct.

In *Ireland*, the necessity of making some further provision for Insane Persons, appears to be more urgent even than in this part of the United Kingdom; as it will be seen in the Evidence, that, with the exception of two public establishments, and some private houses in Dublin, there are no places appropriated separately for the reception of persons in this state
in



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in Ireland. In a few hospitals for general relief of patients, there are wards for Insane Persons, but these are very ill calculated for the attainment of the objects that should be had in view; and as there are no poor houses in that part of the United Kingdom, the pauper lunatics are allowed to wander about the country, till those who are outrageous are sent up to Dublin, in a manner shocking to humanity; while the idiots are left to go about the villages, the sport of the common people.

As the Governors of the Asylum at York called the attention of the other House of Parliament, by Petition, in the last session, to the management of the establishment, in order to show that it was unnecessary to subject it to the provisions of a Bill then depending, respecting mad-houses; and the Governors of Bethlem succeeded on that occasion in obtaining a clause, while the Bill was in the House, for a partial exemption from the provisions of the Act in favour of that Hospital; Your Committee are desirous of directing the attention of the House, to the parts of the Evidence which relate to those two establishments *.

* York, pp. 1 to 10.

* Bethlem, pp. 11 to 16. 26. 34. 35 to 41. 42. 53. 58. 61. 82 to 91. 92 to 106. especially in pp. 104. 117.

Your Committee, impressed with the inadequacy of the Buildings for the reception of Insane Persons throughout England, obtained from an Architect, who has given great attention to this subject, and who has been employed to make designs for an Asylum for the West Riding of the County of York, Plans with Estimates, which they think may be useful to the public, especially in counties where there may be a disposition to erect houses for the reception of Insane Persons under the Act 48 Geo. III. c. 96; as it appears to Your Committee to be highly desirable to promote the operation of that wise and beneficent law, in order to prevent the intolerable evil of these unhappy persons being imprisoned in gaols or in parish workhouses, or permitted to wander about the country in a state of total helplessness and neglect; in the former case to the great annoyance of the other prisoners or poor, as well as the unnecessary restraint and suffering to themselves; and in the latter, to the great danger of their doing mischief to others or to themselves.

See pp. 32. 41. 91.

See p. 196, &c.

See Letter from Mr. Finch, near Salisbury, to the Chairman, p. 187. also p. 52.

Some suggestions for the improvement in the care and management of Houses for the reception of Insane Persons, will be found in the Evidence.

See Evidence, pp. 24. 30. 119. 128.

The length to which this Inquiry has been unavoidably drawn, must in any event have prevented, at this period of the Session, a Bill being passed in the remaining part of it, as perfect as the necessity of the case demands; Your Committee deeply lament the necessity for this delay, because the management in more than one of the places for the reception of the unhappy persons, has been so reprehensible, as, in their opinion, to subject the persons concerned, if it had been known, to criminal prosecutions; but that regret is somewhat abated by a conviction, that the state of those establishments has already been considerably meliorated by the Inquiries which have taken place.

Your Committee are persuaded also, that when the extent of the evil pointed out in this Report shall be generally known, the visiting Physicians in London and its neighbourhood will, as far as the professional calls upon them will permit, give additional attention to the duty they have been desirous of discharging; and that the Justices of the Peace in the several counties will feel it to be their duty to watch as narrowly as circumstances will admit, over the conduct of the keepers of these houses, and the treatment of the patients in them. The Committee trust also, that every Magistrate in the kingdom, who may think the condition of Insane Persons worthy of his attentions, will inform himself, as well as he can, respecting abuses of the nature alluded to, that it may be submitted to His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether it may be fit in such case, that a prosecution should be instituted at the suit of His Majesty's Attorney-General.

If in any instance a Magistrate (during the approaching recess) shall be refused admittance into one of these houses, Your Committee cannot doubt but that such refusal will have due weight with the persons who may

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hereafter be authorized to grant licences for keeping Houses of this description, if they shall be invested with a discretion to refuse them to unfit persons.

*New Bethlem
Hospital.*

AFTER the patient Inquiry made by Your Committee on the matters referred to them, they thought it desirable to inspect the *New Bethlem Hospital*, erected in Saint George's Fields, but not yet inhabited; that they might consider, with the advantage they have acquired from this examination, how far the Building might appear to be well calculated for the accommodation of, and to afford the best chance of cure to, the patients intended to be soon removed into it; and having accordingly made a careful inspection of that Building, they submit the following Observations:—

See Evidence,
pp. 39. 52.

On entering the Gallery on the principal Floor, they observed that the windows were so high as to prevent the Patients looking out; with the unfitness of which Your Committee were struck, as intelligent persons had stated in the course of the examination, that the greatest advantage might be derived from the Patients having opportunities of seeing objects that might amuse them. An alteration might be made in this respect, if it shall be deemed proper by the Governors, at little expense, and with no risk of injury to the building; as it was stated by Mr. Upton, the Deputy Architect, that these windows were at first so constructed, but were afterwards built up at the lower part, on a suggestion that it would be inconvenient to expose the Patients to the view of passengers; which inconvenience it is conceived might be very easily obviated. The windows in the upper story appear to be properly constructed.

See Evidence,
pp. 39. 61.
p. 93.

In the Sleeping Apartments the windows are not glazed, which Your Committee think deprives the Patients, generally, of a reasonable comfort, and may in many cases be really injurious; but what appears to be still more important, there are no flues constructed for the purpose of conducting warm air through the house, except in the lower Galleries on the basement story, which are proposed to be warmed by steam. This appears to be deserving of serious consideration, because it is represented that the Patients suffer sensibly from cold; and Doctor Munro, the Physician to the Hospital, stated, that it had not been thought advisable to administer medicines in the winter, on account of the cold of the house.

In this opinion, respecting the advantage to be derived from the Hospital being properly warmed, the Committee are strengthened by the testimony of the Reverend Mr. Becher, who has witnessed the good effect of it in the *Nottingham Asylum*, and in other places.

In the Infirmary for Female Patients, there are only three small windows, at a great height, on the northern side of the room; it appears therefore, that something should be done for ventilation, which might easily be accomplished.

The construction of the Privies appears to be very objectionable; and there is only one in each of the upper galleries, one in the criminal part, and two on the basement story; nor are there any privies or urinals in the airing grounds. And it seems doubtful, whether the drain passing under the beds, is on such a construction as will answer the intended purpose.

There is no room set apart for the reception of the dead bodies, which should be provided for.

See Evidence,
pp. 20. 52, 126.
128, 129.

There are eight acres of ground occupied for the Hospital, including the site of the buildings, the airing-grounds, and one acre and an half intended for a kitchen garden; and there are nearly four acres more adjoining, which it is the intention of the Governors to turn to profit, the Act of Parliament restraining them to the use of eight. The Committee however, think it may be expedient to submit to the consideration of Parliament, the propriety of enabling the Governors to devote this ground to the general purposes of the Hospital, from a conviction of the benefits the Patients derive from exercise, and in many cases from labour.

And

And that the Patients may not be entirely deprived of these benefits in wet weather, it appears to be desirable that penthouses should be erected against the cross walls of the airing grounds, or a sort of covering in the middle thereof, like those at St. Luke's Hospital.

In the Criminal Part of the building the Committee find the same objection to the height of the windows, as before-mentioned; and that no provision whatever is made for warming this department, although the warming pipes from the basement story are continued to the door at which this part is entered; and it may be useful, if external doors of iron grating should be provided on the basement story.

The Committee have only further to remark, that in this part of the Building there is no Infirmary.

Resolved,

THAT the Chairman be directed to move The House, That leave be given to bring in a Bill, to amend and enforce the Provisions of the Act of the 14th Geo. III. c. 49, intituled "An Act for regulating Madhouses."

11th July 1815.

S E C O N D R E P O R T .

THE COMMITTEE appointed to consider of Provisions being made, for the better Regulation of **MADHOUSES**, in *England*;—**HAVE**, pursuant to the Order of The House, examined the Matter to them referred; and agreed to the following **REPORT**:

THE Report of the Committee appointed in the last Session of Parliament, to consider of the state of Madhouses, contained such full Information on the subject referred to them, as to leave very little to be inquired into by Your Committee; they felt it to be their duty, however, to take such further Evidence as might afford a prospect of its being useful in the inquiry committed to them; they accordingly examined several other Persons, whose Evidence is already before the House, which confirms the opinion stated by the Committee, in the Report of the last Session, as to the Insufficiency of the provisions of the Act of the 14th year of His present Majesty, and to the indispensable necessity for a new Law to supply the defects of that Act.

Your Committee, therefore, referring to the Report above alluded to, and to the Evidence taken in this Session, feel it to be their duty to renew the direction given to the Chairman of the Committee in the last Session, to move the House for leave to bring in a Bill to repeal an Act made in the 14th year of His present Majesty, and another Act made in the 55th year of His present Majesty, for regulating Madhouses in Scotland, and for making other Provisions and Regulations in lieu thereof.

28 May 1816.
