

REPORT

OF THE

VISITING COMMITTEE

TO VISIT THE

HOSPITALS FOR THE INSANE

MADE TO THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE.

DES MOINES:
R. P. CLARKSON, STATE PRINTER.
1877.

REPORT OF VISITING COMMITTEE.

HON. J. G. NEWBOLD, *Governor of Iowa* :

The Visiting Committee to the Iowa Hospitals for Insane respectfully submit the following

REPORT :

Since the last report of this committee, in November, 1875, several changes in its membership have occurred. C. S. Watkins, of Davenport, and Mrs. M. A. P. Darwin, of Burlington, having resigned their positions, these vacancies were filled by the appointment of T. W. Fawcett, of Chariton, and Mrs. C. S. Kincaid, of Muscatine. S. B. Olney, of Fort Dodge, was again added to the Committee in July, 1876.

Your Committee have found but few cases of complaint by patients in either of the hospitals since the last biennial report. The Committee understand that their duties are, mainly, to have a general supervision of the patients in hospital, to see that they are well cared for and well treated in every way, and that they are not improperly detained in the custody of the hospital. These duties your committee have faithfully performed so far as ability and opportunity have enabled them to do. The Committee take great pleasure in expressing their confidence in the ability, and fidelity to their trusts, of the present superintendents of both the hospitals, and believe that they are doing all that they can do under the circumstances for the interests of the patients placed in their care. We find, during the past two years, as reported in 1875, both hospitals very much crowded ; and this is especially the case at Mt. Pleasant, where, in the building calculated for 350 patients, over 600 are now crowded ; and it is surprising how well all have been cared for in this condition of things. The wards are kept clean, and fairly ventilated, and the number in restraint much less than could be supposed possible under the circumstances. But your Committee must again enter their *protest* against the continuance of the practice of overcrowding these hospitals to such a fearful extent ; the condition of the hospital at Independence, in this respect, is nearly as bad as at Mt. Pleasant, and both are becoming more crowded every month. If this process is continued much longer,

they will lose their distinctive features as "curative" institutions for insane, and become nothing but asylums for the care and safe-keeping of the chronic incurables of this unfortunate class. With these facts before it we believe it to be the duty of the incoming legislature to provide, as rapidly as possible, for the increase of accommodations for the insane in the State:—First, By making appropriations sufficient to complete in the shortest possible time the hospital at Independence, according to its original design. Male and female patients now occupy, from necessity, the same wing, and the classification can not be made as perfect as is desirable. Your Committee understood from Dr. Ranney, at their meeting in September last, at Mt. Pleasant, that he would ask, in his report, for an appropriation for extending the extreme wards on each wing of that hospital, thereby improving and extending his classification, as well as increasing his accommodation, for 150 additional patients; and your Committee believe that such application from a superintendent of such long experience, and marked ability in his specialty, should receive careful consideration by the incoming legislature. Further, your committee believe that the so-called "cottage system" is considered a success, for the custody and care of the chronic and incurable insane, in which they can be made comfortable, and be well provided for in every respect, at a much less cost in buildings and general care than in the expensive structures that we now have. We do not desire to go into details on these points, but suggest the propriety of commencing, at as early a day as practicable, a well-devised system of grounds and structures for this purpose; and taking into account the fact (established by the statistics included in the biennial report of the committee, and which still hold good) that the percentage of increase of insanity is greater than our increase of accommodation, it is rendered imperative that this provision be begun very soon.

VISITS AT HOSPITALS.

Visits have been made monthly at each of the hospitals, and the committee have endeavored to make themselves as familiar with all the patients as has been practicable; and in all cases of complaints to find out whether there were any foundation for the same other than the natural discontent common to such cases; and we have found very few who had any real grievance. In every instance, in either hospital, of such complaints, we have found the superintendents willing and anxious to rectify any real cause of grievance. We have at these

visits examined frequently the culinary department and find that great care is used in providing good and abundant food; that it is well cooked, palatable, and clean. The dormitories are provided with good beds and are kept in good order for all patients who are orderly and cleanly in their habits. There are some patients, of filthy habits, who have to be kept on straw beds upon the floor; also some epileptics, who cannot be safely put on bedsteads, are lodged in this way; but the most scrupulous attention is given these to keep them as clean as possible. Cleanliness and good order are the rule, and we aver that nine-tenths of the inmates of these hospitals are better lodged and fed, and better cared for personally, than they ever were in their lives before. But the hospital life becomes tiresome. Many who are only partially insane believe that they are wrongfully detained, and all are more or less anxious to go home. Many poor fellows who have no home are as anxious to go as any.

In the month of July last, a complaint was made, under oath, by one John Marratt, of Poweshiek county, that he saw, when at the Hospital at Mt. Pleasant, for the purpose of visiting a friend of his (who was a patient there, and an epileptic) by the name of John Winchester, that this patient had a cut upon his head and a bruise upon his breast, which he averred were caused by an attendant kicking him. This complaint was placed in the hands of T. W. Fawcett, visitor at the hospital for that month, who investigated the matter thoroughly by taking affidavits of the attendants upon the ward, and also of several intelligent patients in the same ward, and satisfied himself fully that the injuries of the patient were not caused by any maltreatment of attendants or others, but by falls in epileptic spasms, which were unavoidable, and that there was no cause whatever for the complaint.

Your committee submit the following report of their investigation into the scandal in the case of Fanny Shaver:

Having been notified by your predecessor, Governor Kirkwood, that the board of supervisors of Clinton county demanded an investigation into the merits of the charges, she being a resident of that county and a patient for nearly two years in the hospital at Mt. Pleasant, a majority of the committee met on the first day of March, 1877, in the city of Clinton. We found that the said Mrs. Fanny Shaver was adjudged insane by the commissioners of insanity for said county in April, 1875; and in accordance with their order delivered to the authorities of the hospital above named, soon thereafter. We also found that she escaped from hospital about the 28th day of September, 1876, and arrived at her home in Calamus, in said county, on the 6th day of Oc-

tober, 1876, where she remained until the 28th of the same month when she was returned to the hospital, where she now remains.

The complaint of the board of supervisors alleges, first : That there was neglect on the part of the hospital authorities in not having her promptly returned to the hospital after they had knowledge of her whereabouts, and that in consequence of said negligence the county of Clinton was put to a considerable and unnecessary expense in keeping her in custody for nearly a month, and returning her to the hospital.

In regard to this charge, your committee, after examining all the evidence produced, came to the conclusion that no blame whatever could be attached to the hospital authorities. It was simply one of those cases of misunderstanding which frequently occur without any wrong being intended by either—the hospital authorities believing that she was to be returned by her friends, her friends supposing she was to be returned by the county authorities, and the county authorities thinking the superintendent of the hospital had sent for her. Our opinion, therefore, was, as stated above, that no wrong was intended by either party. The chairman of the board of supervisors being present at the examination, concurred in this opinion.

The second charge made by the board of supervisors was, that the said Mrs. Fanny Shaver was, at the time of her sojourn at home, in a state of pregnancy, about five months advanced, and that if she was not yet so, or had been delivered of a child, an abortion had been procured after her return to the hospital. To investigate this charge, your committee proceeded to the town of Calamus on the 2d day of March, 1877, and examined, under oath, such witnesses as were produced before them by the parties desiring the investigation; the superintendent of the hospital, Dr. Ranney, and the chairman of the board of supervisors, Wm. Lake, being present. From the evidence thus produced, we found that the prevailing opinion of the inhabitants in Calamus was that she was in the condition charged when she was at home in October. In support of this view we could find no proof but the opinion of those who had seen her and founded their opinion upon her physical appearance, and her assertion that she was pregnant; and the professional written opinion given by the physician, Dr. Cook, after an examination by order of the trustees of the township, had no better foundation, as he testified under oath. How any physician could so far forget the teachings of the profession as to certify that a woman (and she crazy) was five or six months advanced in pregnancy, without making use of all the means known to the profession to ascertain the truth or falsity of these rumors, was to the committee inexplicable, and

cannot be too severely censured. Out of this pretended examination has grown the whole scandal. This woman left her home, emaciated and haggard from the effects of active, excited mania. After eighteen months' treatment, becoming more quiet, and with physical health restored, she comes back robust and fleshy, with a natural abdominal fullness. Forthwith suspicion is aroused and the report spreads that she is *enciente*; a physician is called upon (by the township trustees, who desire to know the truth) to examine the case, and he certifies that such is the fact. This is at once accepted by the public as confirming the suspicion; and now the physician testifies under oath that the only examination he made of the case was to ask her a few questions, and to look at her as she stood in the street before him. Your committee have no doubt whatever that, had a proper investigation been made of the case at that time by a competent physician, he would have reported that the woman was not pregnant, and this false charge against the hospital would never had been made; the public mind would have been saved the excitement attendant upon the circulation of so vile a calumny upon the management of one of our best state institutions, and the state the expense of our investigation. This ended the investigation at Calamus, and satisfied the chairman of the board of supervisors of the entire want of any just foundation for the said charges against the hospital, and we think had the same effect upon all reasonable people present.

On Tuesday, March 6, 1877, the committee again held a session at the hospital at Mt. Pleasant, and proceeded to make a thorough and exhaustive examination, not only of the latter part of the charge, to-wit: that an abortion had been procured, but also as to whether there was any possibility of the charge being true that the woman was, or had been, pregnant. In this part of the investigation the committee examined under oath the superintendent, assistant-superintendent, and both assistant physicians, the superior of the wards for female patients, and such attendants as had had charge of Mrs. Shaver, both before her escape and since her return to the hospital; and from none of them could we gain the least suspicion of the truth of either charge; but, on the contrary, the most entire falsity of both was established beyond a doubt; the medical evidence given in this part of the examination of the case was thorough and satisfactory.

The committee, therefore, taking into consideration all the evidence in the case, can arrive at no other conclusion than that the charge that the said Fanny Shaver has been in a state of pregnancy at any time

since she became a resident of said hospital is not true; and, that being so, the charge of abortion also falls to the ground. The committee take this opportunity to state that the superintendent, Dr. Ranney, gave us every facility for making the examination at the hospital complete, and has shown an anxiety to have a thorough investigation of the scandal.

Your committee desire to call especial attention to the practice of sending criminals convicted of capital crimes, and confined in the penitentiaries of the state, who have become insane since their incarceration in prison, to the hospitals for insane. Many of them are murderers, and their destructive instincts are just as active as ever they were, and we believe that it is an imposition upon respectable, law-abiding people to have their friends sent to the hospital to be compelled to associate more or less with these vile criminals; and we suggest that upon the score of safety, and a proper consideration of the rights and feelings of other patients and their friends, this practice should be stopped, and a suitable ward provided in each penitentiary for the care and treatment of such cases.

The committee are pleased to see at their recent visits at Mt. Pleasant, that the airing courts are nearly completed, and they are of ample size, affording sufficient room for patients to exercise freely at will; they are also well shaded and inviting in appearance. Those at Independence have been in use for some months past, but they cannot be made so pleasant on account of the newness of the grounds and the lack of trees; and the hospital not being finished, only one of them can be now permanently located.

We notice with satisfaction the large number at this hospital who go out to work in the gardens and upon the farm, also, that very few are under any kind of personal restraint, and a still smaller number confined in the strong rooms.

The rules and by-laws adopted by the committee on April 14, 1875, are still in force as then adopted, and do not need to be here reprinted.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

S. B. OLNEY,
T. W. FAWCETT,
C. S. KINCAID,

Visiting Committee to the Iowa Hospitals for the Insane.

OCTOBER 1, 1877.

SECOND BIENNIAL REPORT

OF THE

STATE FISH COMMISSION

OF

IOWA.

BEING REPORTS FOR THE YEARS 1875-6 AND 1876-7.

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