

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT
OF THE
SUPERINTENDENT
OF THE
IOWA HOSPITAL FOR INSANE,
TO
THE SENATE
OF THE
TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

DES MOINES: ✓

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1868.

REPORT.

To the Honorable Senate of the State of Iowa :

GENTLEMEN :—In obedience to the resolution of the Senate I have the honor to present the following Report :

The operation of the act of the Eleventh General Assembly, chapter 132, for the relief and benefit of idiot and imbecile persons has not been attended with all the results its friends had hoped for. Soon after the act took effect successful application was made for admission of a few cases into the Illinois Institution for Idiots and Imbeciles, but the great expense attending their removal and maintenance abroad has had the effect to keep all but two of thirty seven applications, within the State. Two idiot children, one from Cedar and one from Johnson counties, have been sent to the Institution above named, and two cases deemed peculiarly deserving of some special care and attention have been received into the Hospital. One of the two sent to the Illinois Institution, I have been informed by the superintendent is making good progress and is a promising pupil.

The two cases received into the Hospital were refused admission into institutions out of the State. Their condition is apparently hopeless and is rendered more pitiable if possible, by being complicated with epilepsy. The crowded state of the Hospital as well as the obvious impropriety of associating the insane with idiots in the same institution, led me to resist strong appeals and refuse the admission of others not much less deserving. And beside, as we are not prepared to put in operation and carry out the modern system of treatment and instruction of idiots, their presence here would be for custodial purposes only and would have prevented the admission of curable cases of insanity, or rendered necessary the discharge

cases of chronic insanity, who would be more or less dangerous and troublesome to the public if at large. This in brief comprises all that has been done pursuant to the law of the last General Assembly.

Under the advice and direction of a Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Hospital for the Insane, an effort was made last year to obtain some information touching the number and condition of the idiots in the State. Returns from twenty-nine counties revealed the names and some facts relative to fifty - three idiots and imbeciles, none of whom it was reported, could be taught in the common schools. Of those embraced in the returns, 24 were said to be cases of congenital idiocy, while in the remaining cases, the information was indefinite, or it was stated that convulsive, or some other disease in infancy prevented the development of the mind. The returns show that 39 are under 20 years of age; 29 seem capable of improvement, or are proper cases for attempts at instruction, or the formation of cleanly and industrious habits; 5 cases appeared to the reporters "doubtful;" in 6 no answer is given, while in only 13 it is stated that there seems little or no prospect of mental improvement.

Every case reported appears to be in a state of deep, hopeless degradation in which they must remain unless some efficient State aid is extended to them. It is painful to know that in some instances, it is reported, female idiots have become mothers. No stronger argument exists, perhaps, to show that a suitable institution should be provided not only for their instruction and improvement, but for their custody and protection.

The information obtained through the inquiries made seem to show that here as elsewhere, idiocy is most commonly associated with poverty, and it is often to be traced to intemperance, or a disregard of some physical laws. Perhaps from these facts in some degree this most wretched and helpless of our population is generally, and has been so far in this State, less cared for than any other.

The number of idiots included in the foregoing statistics is probably but a portion of all there are in the State. But little interest seems to be manifested for this class by the public. Although twelve hundred circulars requesting information were issued, returns

were received in only sixty - one instances. Taking, however, for an estimate, the lowest per cent of idiots to the population of any State where a reliable census has been taken, which will not, probably, be above the proportion here, the number known to us is less than one-fifth of the whole.

When unprovided for, idiots for the most part grow or exist in idleness. If nothing is done for them in the ways indicated by modern science their condition almost certainly grows worse. The animal appetites and propensities being first developed and unchecked by any development of the moral and intellectual nature, they become more depraved in their tastes, mischievous in disposition, and sink lower in degradation, during the wretched lives which they live. In ordinary persons the appetites and propensities if unrestrained by development of the moral and intellectual faculties, lead inevitably to degradation; but for these the prevailing systems of education and moral instruction are sufficient. The poor idiot, however, in consequence of a defective physical organization, can not be educated by the ordinary methods. Shut out from the light by a dense, material curtain, he is left to grope his downward way in darkness. The germs of the moral and mental faculties may be present, but peculiar forces and processes are required for their development. Some idiots seem to have feebler perceptive faculties than some brutes; but they almost all have at least a feeble portion of that light of the soul, which is the crowning glory of humanity.

The forces and processes necessary for the development of what is noble, though dormant in the unfortunate idiot, modern science undertakes to supply through a system which has for its basis:

- 1st. The physiological development of the organization.
- 2d. The development of the senses.
- 3d. The development of the intellectual faculties.
- 4th. The development of the affective or moral functions.

It is plain enough that such a system can not be carried out under any organization now existing here. Hence the necessity of founding and organizing institutions expressly for this purpose, many of which are monuments of the advancing civilization of our age and country.

That idiots may be educated, instructed, or much improved, is no longer a question of doubt. It is only within a quarter of a century, however, that the fact has been established and some results reached that seem to be little less than marvellous.

It is not to be expected that all, or even a majority of idiots will get a very thorough acquaintance with common branches of learning, or that they will be raised up to play an independent part in life; but it is expected many will gain some profitable knowledge, humble though it be, while others will be raised out of vicious and debasing habits, and trained to habits of cleanliness and decency.

Ten years ago Dr. Jarvis said: "The more I see of the condition and progress of the school at South Boston, the stronger is my conviction that idiocy, imbecility and feeble-mindedness are not fixed and unalterable facts in humanity, but that these poor children can be improved and raised somewhat as certainly as those who are originally endowed with larger gifts."

The late Rev. Mr. Gallaudet said: "Enough has been accomplished to satisfy the instructors of the Asylum of the possibility of improving to a much greater degree than has been done here or any where in this country this entire class of unfortunate persons, and of the propriety of establishing *schools for idiots* as soon as it can possibly be done."

It would seem, then, that the time has come for this State to complete the circle of her charities, already second to those of no other State, by making provision for at least seventy-five idiots, with the necessary officers and teachers, in a commodious institution to be built for the purpose. As but one institution of the kind will be needed in the State it should be so located as to be easily accessible from all parts.

In selecting a site care should be exercised to find a healthy one, sufficiently elevated to afford good drainage and fine landscape views, protected by a natural grove, if possible, from the rudest winds of winter and the greatest heat of summer, with an unfailing supply of pure water, and land enough for ample exercise grounds and for agricultural purposes.

The building should be substantial, ample, well warmed and ventilated, with good accommodations for bathing, &c. The cost, exclusive of land, would probably be not far from \$1,000, for each pupil the building would accommodate.

Respectfully submitted,

MARK RANNEY.

IOWA HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE, }
January 24th, 1868. }