

SENATE No. 389.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

IN SENATE, June 9, 1869.

The Joint Special Committee appointed to consider the "necessity of treating inebriation as a disease, and of legislating for its cure as well as its punishment," the subject being introduced by the petition of J. H. Stearns and others, have considered the same, and submit the following

R E P O R T :

It is a well accepted theory among leading medical men that inebriation is a disease and should be treated as such ; that it is as much of a disease as any variety of insanity, and often originates in causes entirely beyond the control of the person who suffers therefrom.

It therefore appears to the Committee that the State should number among its charitable institutions one institution, at least, for the exclusive treatment of this malady.

At the present time, inebriates are sent to the house of correction, the common jail or the insane asylum. Neither of these places is adapted to the treatment of such cases, and for this reason, if for no other, it is not a matter of surprise that rarely, if ever, do inebriates, treated in this way, recover their manhood and return to active usefulness in private or public life.

The State of New York has founded an asylum exclusively for this class of patients. The institution is denominated the

New York State Inebriate Asylum, and is located at Binghampton. The Committee visited this institution, and, by the politeness of Dr. Albert Day, the Superintendent, the buildings of the asylum were opened to their inspection, and the details of management explained to them.

This institution has at the present time about one hundred patients. These patients are made up, to a very large extent, of persons of culture and refinement; fifty per cent. of whom are radically cured and return to their homes to bless and adorn the society they once demoralized and disgraced.

To this institution, any justice of the Supreme Court or the county judge of the county in which any inebriate may reside, has power to commit such inebriate to the Asylum upon the production and filing of an affidavit or affidavits by two respectable practising physicians, to the effect that such inebriate is lost to self-control, unable to attend to business or dangerous to remain at large. No person is committed for a less time than three months, and no patient who voluntarily surrenders himself for treatment is received until he first signs an obligation to remain that length of time in the institution, subject to its rules and discipline.

The Washingtonian Home, in Boston, which is a private charity, is the only institution in this State which bears any resemblance to the New York Inebriate Asylum. This Home, which has for several years deservedly received the patronage of the State, returns at least fifty per cent. of its patients sound and well back to society. This Home asks aid from the State the present year, that it may enlarge its buildings and furnish increased accommodations to this class of patients. The State, at the present time, has no direct control of the Home. Should however, any considerable sum of money be appropriated by the State for the enlargement and support of this Home, some legal provisions would undoubtedly be made, reserving the right to the State to commit inebriates to its charge.

The Committee are not aware of the existence of any institutions of this kind, excepting the two named in this report. They consider the subject of great importance, not only from a sanitary but a philanthropic point of view. It may be that the Washingtonian Home could be enlarged, or removed to some more eligible location, and thus for the present meet the neces-

sities of the State. It is possible, however, that an independent institution should be established, solely as a State charity. So novel is the subject, that the committee are not able, in the limited time given them, to prepare definite plans for presentation to the Legislature.

Profoundly impressed, however, with the great importance of the subject, the Committee recommend the adoption of the accompanying resolution.

DANIEL NEEDHAM, *Chairman.*

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

In the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty-Nine.

R E S O L V E

Authorizing the appointment of Commissioners to furnish plans for an Inebriate Asylum.

Resolved, That the governor, with the advice and consent of the council, be and hereby is authorized to appoint three commissioners to select a site and furnish, if in their judgment it shall be expedient, plans and specifications for an inebriate asylum, together with details for the management of the same; and further, that said commissioners consider in this connection, the proposals made to the present legislature by the trustees of the Washingtonian Home, and report on the whole subject to the governor and council for the benefit of the next legislature; said commissioners shall not be entitled to any compensation for personal services.