

SENATE No. 190.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

IN SENATE, May 11, 1875.

The Committee on Public Charitable Institutions, to which was referred the Report of the Commissioners of Lunacy, have considered the subject and report, that they do not think it expedient at the present time to present a bill establishing a "Commission of Lunacy."

The Committee have given hearings to parties who professed to have been aggrieved by the treatment which they have personally received, and to complainants on part of friends who have suffered from the same cause. Many of the complaints were trivial, while others were of a more or less serious nature; but in every case, when brought to the notice of superintendents and trustees, they have been carefully considered and the proper remedies applied.

The State has in charge some two thousand insane persons, most of whom are in state hospitals, and with such a number under treatment it is remarkable that so few causes of complaint occur.

The Committee believe that the superintendents of these institutions are men of honest intentions, eminent in their profession, benevolent in disposition, and possess a practical knowledge of this special phase of disease, and are evidently entitled to the full confidence of the community.

The trustees are selected from our best and most honored men. They are interested in all that appertains to these

institutions, and they cannot be actuated by any motives except those which arise from a desire to perform their duties for the best interests of those under their charge. They can have *no* inducement to prolong the period of confinement of patients, and *every* inducement that recovery should be speedy, and that treatment should be kind.

A commission of lunacy could not be more efficient in discovering and curing abuses than these trustees, and they hardly need the surveillance of a commission to stimulate them to the discharge of their duties.

The Committee predicate these conclusions on the subject, upon their knowledge of the management of our state institutions. They profess to know little of the management of private asylums for the insane, but from what has come under their observation, they have formed the opinion that some legal provision might be made, with advantage to such institutions, for a more authoritative connection with and investigation into the modes of management, than has heretofore been allowed. In conclusion, the Committee repeat that further legislation is inexpedient.

For the Committee,

FRANCIS D. STEDMAN.