

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Public Documents of Maine:

BEING THE

ANNUAL REPORTS

OF THE VARIOUS

PUBLIC OFFICERS AND INSTITUTIONS

FOR THE YEAR

1879.

VOLUME I.

AUGUSTA:

SPRAGUE & SON, PRINTERS TO THE STATE.

1880.

FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

VISITING COMMITTEE

OF THE

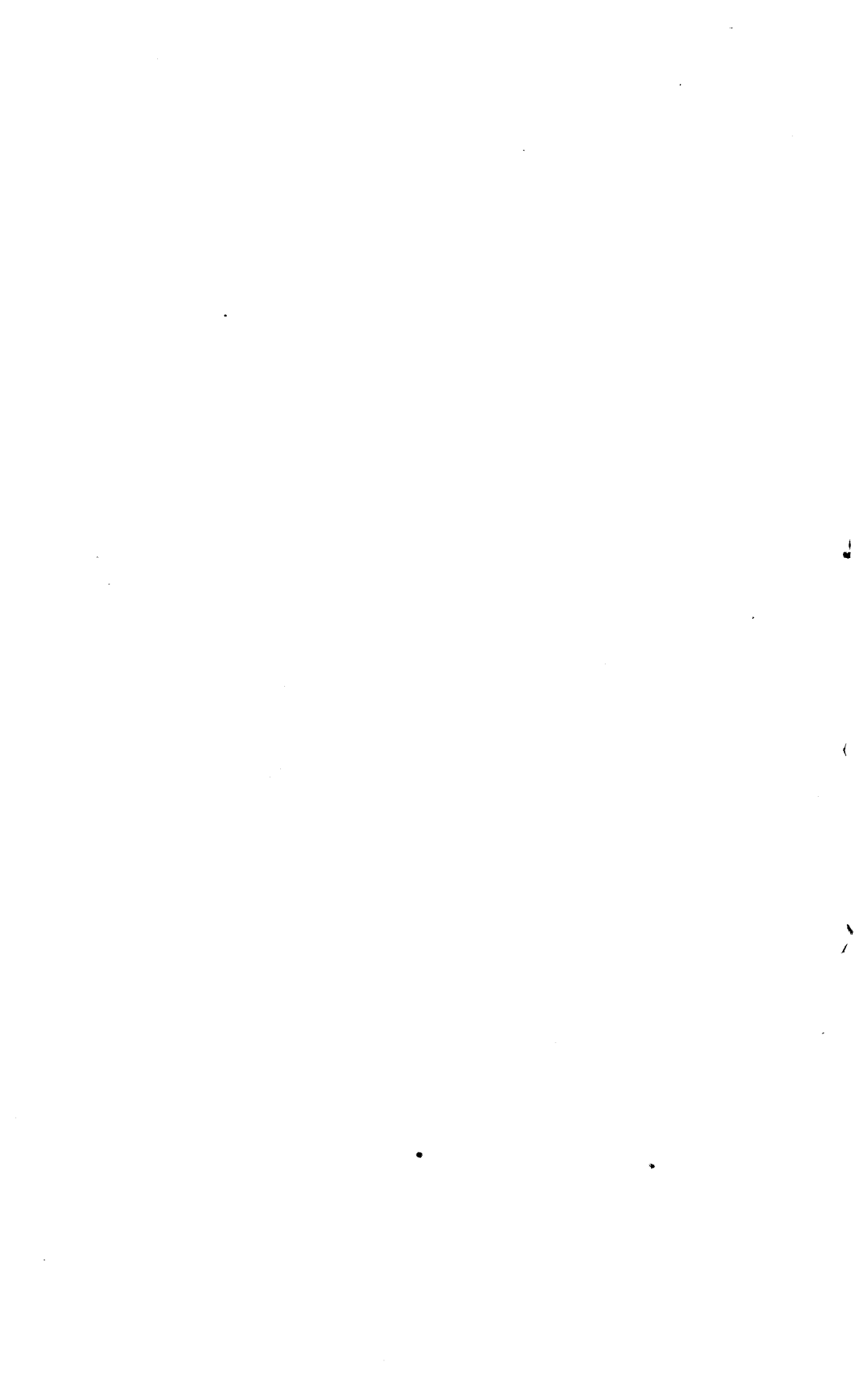
MAINE INSANE HOSPITAL.

1878.

AUGUSTA:

SPRAGUE, OWEN & NASH, PRINTERS TO THE STATE.

1878.



REPORT.

*To the Honorable Governor and
Council of the State of Maine:*

GENTLEMEN:—During the session of the Legislature of 1874, an act to amend chapter 143 of the Revised Statutes, relating to the Insane Hospital, for the better management of this Institution, the protection of its inmates and the regulation of commitments thereto, was passed, from which we copy the following sections:

SECT. 4. A committee of the council, consisting of two, with whom shall be associated one woman, shall be appointed by the governor annually, who shall visit the hospital at their discretion to ascertain if the inmates thereof are humanely treated, and they shall make prompt report from time to time of every instance of intentional abuse or ill-treatment, to the trustees and superintendent of the hospital, who shall take notice thereof, and cause the offender to be punished as required by section twenty-eight, chapter one hundred forty-three of the revised statutes.

SECT. 5. If any wilful injury shall be inflicted by any officer, attendant or employee of the hospital, upon the person of any patient therein, and knowledge thereof shall come to the said committee of visitors, they shall report the fact immediately to the said trustees and superintendent, and if the superintendent fails forthwith to complain thereof as required by the statute aforesaid, one of the said visitors shall enter a complaint thereof before the court having jurisdiction of such offence, and on conviction the offender shall be punished as provided by law. And in trials for such offences, the statement of any patient cognizant thereof, shall be taken and considered for what it may be worth; and no one connected with the hospital shall be allowed to sit upon the jury which shall try the case.

SECT. 6. In case of the sudden death of any patient in the hospital, under circumstances of reasonable suspicion as to the innocent cause thereof, a coroner's inquest shall be held as provided by law in other cases, and the committee of visitors shall cause a coroner to be immediately notified for that purpose.

SECT. 7. In all cases of preliminary proceedings for the commitment of any person to the hospital, the evidence and certificate of at least two respectable physicians, based upon due inquiry and personal examination of the person to whom insanity is imputed, shall be required to establish the fact of insanity.

SECT. 8. If the committee of visitors shall become satisfied that any inmate of the hospital has been unnecessarily and wrongfully committed, or is unnecessarily detained and held as a patient therein, they shall apply to any judge of the supreme judicial court, or judge of probate within the county where the restraint exists, for a writ of habeas corpus, who shall issue the same, and cause said inmate to be brought before him, and after notice to the party procuring his commitment and a hearing of all interested in the question at issue, if satisfied that such inmate is not a proper subject for custody and treatment in the hospital, shall discharge such inmate from the hospital, and restore him to his liberty. But this section shall not apply to the case of any person charged with or convicted of crime and duly committed to the hospital by order of court.

SECT. 9. The names of the committee of visitors and their post office address, shall be kept posted in every ward of the hospital, and every inmate shall be allowed to write when and whatever he may please to them or either of them, unless otherwise ordered by a majority of the committee, in writing, which order shall continue in force until countermanded by said committee in writing. And, for this purpose, every patient, if not otherwise ordered as aforesaid, shall be furnished by the superintendent, on request, with suitable materials for writing, enclosing and sealing letters. And the superintendent shall provide, at the expense of the state, securely locked letter boxes, easily accessible to all the inmates, to be placed in the hospital, into which such letters can be dropped by the writer thereof. No officer, attendant, or employee of the hospital shall be allowed to have the means of reaching the contents of these boxes, but the letters in them shall be collected weekly by some member of the committee, or by such person as the committee may authorize for the purpose, who shall pre-pay such only as shall be addressed to some one of the committee, and deposit them in the post office without delay.

SECT. 10. It is hereby made the duty of the superintendent, or party having charge of any person confined on account of insanity, to deliver to said person any letter or writing to him or her directed, without opening or reading the same, provided this letter has been forwarded by the committee, or is directed to such individuals as the committee have authorized to send or to receive letters without the committee's inspection.

SECT. 11. The hospital shall be visited as often as once in every month by at least one member of the committee, and this visit shall be made at irregular, and not at stated periods; no previous notice, information, or intimation thereof, shall be given or allowed to the superintendent, or any officer, attendant or employee of the hospital, but as far as possible, all their visits shall be made unexpectedly to the superintendent

and all others having the care of the hospital and its inmates; and in no case shall the committee be accompanied by any officer or employee of the hospital, when making their visits through the wards, except upon the special request of some one of the committee.

SECT. 12. The committee of visitors shall make report to the governor and council on the first day of December, annually, and as much oftener as the welfare of the patients or the public good may require, setting forth their doings and any facts with regard to the hospital which they may deem important to be laid before the public. The compensation of said committee shall be two dollars each per day, for the time actually spent in visiting the hospital and actual traveling expenses; *provided*, the said committee do not receive compensation as councillors, for the same days in which said official visits are made to said hospital; and their accounts, including a reasonable sum for the letter carrier, provided for in section nine, shall be audited by the governor and council, who shall draw their warrant on the treasurer of state for the amount found due.

SECT. 13. Any person neglecting to perform the duties imposed upon him by the provisions of this act, shall be removable from office by the authority from whom he received his appointment, and if removed, shall be ineligible for office or place in the hospital in future.

SECT. 14. Sections one and three of chapter one hundred and forty-three of the revised statutes, and all other acts and parts of acts inconsistent with the provisions of this act, are hereby repealed.

In accordance with section twelve of the above act, the Committee of Visitors to the Hospital for the Insane, would present the Fifth Annual Report :

The first duty devolving upon us was "to ascertain if the inmates thereof are humanely treated." We have made this a leading feature of our visits, making the personal acquaintance of as many patients as possible, and inviting their confidence, in the belief that in this manner a better knowledge of their condition and treatment could be obtained.

Our visits have been made at irregular hours and unexpected times, unaccompanied by officers or attendants, except by request, and have been as frequent as once in every month by two or more of the Committee, and once every week by the resident member. Naturally we met many patients who had complaints to make; but in every case we have made investigations, and generally found that such complaints were rather the fruit of a diseased imagination than based on fact. Whenever we have found by careful study

and examination of individual cases that longer detention would not likely be of benefit to the patients, we have called the attention of the officers to their condition and recommended their discharge. All such recommendations have received courteous attention on the part of the officers and our wishes cheerfully complied with. In this connection, we take great pleasure in reporting the courteous manner of officers and attendants toward us at all times, and we would thank them for the kindly spirit with which our inquiries have been met and the attentive consideration our suggestions have received. We are satisfied that the Superintendent is prompt in discharging attendants who are not kind and attentive to those in their charge. We find an excellent class of young men and women acting in the capacity of attendants and nurses. These attendants occupy a very responsible position, and should be encouraged to their best endeavors for the good and comfort of their charges; their services are valuable in proportion to their experience, and we deprecate any measure which would tend to substitute inexperienced persons in the places they now occupy.

By the provisions of section nine of the law herein published, the State furnishes securely locked letter boxes, accessible to every patient, and with the names and post office addresses of the Visiting Committee posted over them. Some of the patients avail themselves of this means, while others send their letters as formerly, through the officers. These letters have been attended to by the resident member each week with one or two unavoidable exceptions, and many letters have been written to friends of the inmates.

SUPPLY OF WATER.

We regret to report that the supply of water has not been sufficient the past year for the purposes of the hospital, owing to the severe drouth during the summer and fall. Considerable inconvenience was experienced in keeping the apartments clean and the patients in as good sanitary condition as

desirable. Additional reservoir capacity for holding water has been made during the season, and it is hoped it will be sufficient for all needful supply in the future.

BATH ROOMS.

These have been kept in good condition generally, though when there was a short supply of water, they were not what they should have been in the matter of cleanliness, a result in no way attributable to attendants. While the bath rooms and water closets are in one room the best arrangement is not effected. Bath rooms for the private halls on each side, are very much needed, as well as improvements in the water closet arrangements.

BEDS AND BEDDING.

Too great care cannot be given to these, as their condition contribute largely to the welfare and comfort of patients. We have found them generally in as good order as the physical and mental state of the patients permits.

CLOTHING.

The clothing of the inmates is generally as good as their condition will allow. In some instances an improvement might be made in washing and ironing. Especially should coarse clothing be thoroughly washed and ironed.

TABLE FARE.

Our visits have often been purposely made at the time of serving meals, and we have always found the food sufficient and wholesome. The promiscuous coming together at meal time of all classes, is much to be regretted, and forcibly demonstrates the necessity of

BETTER CLASSIFICATION.

We are aware that the present crowded state of the halls, prevents such systematic classification as is desirable, yet it

seems to us that it should be attempted; that it is necessary to the personal and daily comfort of those patients who are curable or whose insanity is of a mild type, and that diligent observation on the part of attendants, promptly reported to officers, might effect an improvement in this particular. There have been several instances the past year of one patient injuring another—one of them quite serious in its results. Such facts show the need there is of reform in this respect, a closer classification of the harmless and violent, or, in the absence of such reform, or its impossibility, the strictest enforcement of the rules forbidding attendants to leave their charges without permission of a superior and *until actually relieved*.

NIGHT CARE.

We are gratified to learn that the trustees, at their last annual meeting held in December, approved of the recommendations of the Committee, and have employed two additional attendants for night service. One on the male and one on the female side of the hospital. This will add greatly to the comfort of the inmates.

SICK ROOMS.

The four sick rooms, two for each sex, are almost constantly occupied by the very sick, and are quite insufficient in number and accommodation, and their location,—on the lower floor—is decidedly unfavorable, depriving the patients of pure air, sunshine and quiet. A ward on each side of the hospital for this purpose would be a most excellent change, and obviate unavoidable neglect of patients in the halls when more than four happen to be sick at one time, which has frequently occurred the past year. We are glad to say that a competent man and woman have been secured as nurses for these rooms. It further seems to the Committee, that it would be conducive not only to health but to humanity, not to allow a decline of temperature at night in the halls, and especially in the lodges. To prevent this, it would be necessary to employ a night engineer during the winter months.

HOUR OF RISING.

The Committee of last year suggested that from October to April the inmates be allowed to remain in bed an hour longer. This suggestion has been heeded, somewhat, in the women's halls, but the men are still required to rise at half-past five. What need there is for such early rising we fail to comprehend, the only result being to make the day longer, which, in its monotonous routine, must be all too long.

AMUSEMENT AND OCCUPATION.

An increase of amusement and light occupation in the halls is required to divert and employ the minds of those who are constantly brooding over their own unpleasant condition. Music, games and other pastimes would, we feel assured, add greatly to their comfort, and produce excellent results as a curative agency. Much pleasure and benefit are derived from frequent entertainments in the hall provided for that purpose. On an average of two evenings in the week, from December to April, some entertainment is provided for the patients, in which officers, attendants, and, with but few exceptions, all the employees engage. Much credit is due all for the interest with which they seem to participate in these interesting entertainments, but especially would we mention the young gentlemen who constitute the orchestra and who contribute so largely to the pleasure of all present. For the class of gloomy, excitable and sensitive, who seldom if ever go out to the amusement hall, it seems to us there should be an effort made to amuse or employ them more generally in some light work. In this connection we suggest the halls be made as cheerful and home-like as possible. There is need in all the halls of more pictures, plants and other attractions which do much to render any place more home-like, and which, though to some minds are of minor consideration, when well applied must be curative in their results.

OUT-OF-DOOR RECREATION.

Former reports have mentioned the good effects of out-of-door exercise, and we can fully endorse the appeals therein made for larger opportunities in this direction—both walking and riding. One coach, pair of horses and man can hardly do justice to so many patients, especially when there are other demands for their services.

MECHANICAL RESTRAINT.

With competent officers, and the rule of the institution forbidding the application or removal of restraining apparatus unless by order of a superior, there is little danger of abuse in this direction.

ACCOMMODATIONS.

The demand for accommodations exceeds the supply, but the weeding out of those patients whose disease is chronic, and who are harmless and could be easily taken care of by the various towns, and *far more cheaply*, would temporarily, at least, relieve the institution from its present over-crowded state.

CONCLUSION.

We trust that all practicable means will be put in operation to raise our hospital to the highest standard attainable by any institution of the kind in the country, and that trustees, officers, employees, and Visiting Committee, will work harmoniously for this end. We feel assured that the trustees of the hospital fully realize the important and varied needs of this institution, and are laboring with commendable zeal for its prosperity and for the greatest comfort of the inmates.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

In concluding this report we present the following recommendations:

- 1st. That new bath-rooms be supplied for the private halls, and that the existing bath-rooms be separated from the water-closets, and these latter provided with modern improvements.

2d. That a better classification of patients be attempted, and that the violent ones be removed to the east halls from their present central location.

3d. That an additional engineer be employed during the winter months.

4th. That more sick-rooms be provided and in a place better adapted to such purposes.

5th. That more amusement and some light occupation be furnished in the halls.

6th. That larger opportunities be afforded for out-of-door exercise, and to that end that another and better carriage, a pair of horses and man be employed.

7th. That some systematic effort be made for a more general diffusion of a knowledge of insanity, its causes, prevention and treatment.

Reforms and changes in public institutions, we know, are slow at the best, and while we cannot belittle the importance of any of these suggestions, we trust that those at least which have been recommended by successive Committees will receive careful consideration.

Respectfully submitted.

WM. F. GARCELON, }
E. C. FARRINGTON, } *Committee of*
MRS. G. W. QUINBY, } *Visitors.*

STATE OF MAINE.

IN COUNCIL, December 18, 1878.

Accepted, and seven hundred copies ordered to be printed.

Attest:

S. J. CHADBOURNE,

Secretary of State.