

# 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

1880.

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VOLUME I.

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AUGUSTA:

SPRAGUE & SON, PRINTERS TO THE STATE.

1880.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

VISITING COMMITTEE

OF THE

MAINE INSANE HOSPITAL,

FOR THE YEAR

1879.



AUGUSTA:  
E. F. PILLSBURY & CO., STATE PRINTERS.  
1880.



# REPORT.

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*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 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 the 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 councilors, 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 12 of the foregoing act, the Committee of Visitors to the Insane Hospital would present the Sixth Annual report.

To perform the duty of ascertaining "if the inmates thereof are humanely treated," your committee has unremittingly devoted itself. Though having at the outset no suspicion that patients in the hospital receive other than kindly treatment, nevertheless we have made precisely the same careful examination into every probable and improbable story that has been confided to us by patients, and into all the opportunities that might have presented, whereby persons could have neglected or abused the patients.

Our visits have been made at no stated times, and very seldom has notice of our contemplated visit been given to those in charge. The fullest opportunities have been afforded us to investigate the different wards, and to hold conversation with those who had complaints to make.

As those who have had any experience with insane people well know, there is a constant disposition manifested to murmur and complain of the restraint imposed; to make charges against the attendants, officers and all who in any way are considered as responsible for their detention in the asylum. This is a matter that causes embarrassment and no little solicitude upon the part of those who, for the first time, became visitors. There is a deep cunning and a shrewdness in the presentation of complaints that is characteristic of those who suffer from mental aberration, but we

have patiently listened to all such persons who have claimed our attention, and have in every case satisfied ourselves that no real cause for most of these complaints and tales of abuse and neglect really exist.

It is impossible, as is well known and understood, to draw the line that separates the realm of diseased imagination from the world of reason and healthy mental action, hence the perfectly probable and honest stories that are related, would be found on examination lacking in any real foundation. In fact no more cause would be found to exist than is found in the complaints made by people in full possession of their mental faculties who are living under the rules and regulations that are rendered necessary in the proper government of colleges, manufacturing establishments, etc.

We are convinced that many patients are sent to the hospital, who could be as well, if not better, taken care of at home, but such persons receive all the attention and care that could reasonably be expected. Such persons, however, we have recommended be discharged, especially where longer detention offered no reasonable prospect of being beneficial. We have noticed that some patients are sent to the hospital quite as much for the purpose of relieving friends of the care of such as from any other motive.

#### ATTENDANTS.

To the intelligence, patience and fidelity of the attendants in charge of the insane, the success of the institution is very largely due. Be the Superintendent and his officers ever so intelligent, honest and capable, their efforts to render the hospital what it is intended to be, will prove fruitless if the attendants who are directly responsible for the care of patients fail in the discharge of their duties. Where so much must of necessity be trusted to these custodians of patients; where such disagreeable duties need constantly to be performed we are of the opinion that the greatest care should be exercised in the selection of this class of employees. Furthermore, we deprecate the employment of those who lack the years, patience and discretion that is obviously of the utmost importance. The desire to economize may lead to the employing of some attendants who being young are willing to accept these situations for what would be considered nominal wages.

We are acquainted with no class that should receive better pay for work well done than the attendants in our hospital. We think more mature men and women, as a rule, should be employed



and they should be retained as long as they prove themselves worthy and faithful in the discharge of their duties. But in order to do this the compensation should be raised to that point where the attendants can feel that they are receiving as high wages as the same ability would secure in other positions in life. "The laborer is worthy of his hire" applies with as much force to the class of which we speak, as to any other. The people of the State are not only willing but anxious to furnish the means, if needed, to provide the kindest and best attention to the unfortunate ones who find a home at the Asylum.

#### LETTER BOXES.

There are provided in proper and easily accessible places, throughout the building, securely locked letter boxes, into which the patients can drop such letters as they may fear to entrust to other channels. Having alone the key to these boxes we have taken out letters therein, stamped them and deposited the same in the post-office. Some of the patients have written us private letters that have in every case been treated with the same attention that we would give to letters coming from any other persons.

#### WATER SUPPLY.

The long felt want of a constant and abundant supply of pure water for every purpose demanded at the hospital is now supplied, and no further fears can be entertained of a failure under any circumstances. The means for extinguishing fire are second to none in like institutions in this country, and reflect great credit upon the projector of the system—Mr. C. B. Lakin, the steward.

#### BATH ROOMS.

The bath rooms we have generally found in as good condition as can perhaps be under the present arrangements, but this even was not satisfactory. The Visiting Committee last year suggested that "bath rooms for the private halls on each side are very much needed." A bath room properly arranged has been added to the private hall on the female side, but this is not sufficient. More should be added, and we repeat the suggestion upon this subject, and in all the halls the bath rooms should be separated from the water closets. To keep bath rooms in a cleanly condition, and make a bath anything but a punishment to the

patients, this suggestion of separating these rooms should receive immediate attention.

The beds and bedding have been found usually in a respectable and comfortable condition. It is almost impossible to keep some of the beds in the most desirable condition, for obvious reasons.

#### TABLE FARE.

We have frequently been present at meal-time, and have carefully scrutinized the quality, quantity and method of serving the food, and upon the whole we judge the table fare to be as good in quality and sufficient in quantity as is demanded, though if we could judge from the complaints made by some of the patients, we should conclude that they were used to the most sumptuous fare at home ; an inference that we think would hardly prove a fact in very many cases.

#### BETTER CLASSIFICATION.

This is a matter that we regard as of the highest importance. The relief or care of insane patients depends very largely upon the proper classification. The placing of convalescents with patients who are totally insane, or the associating of the mildly insane with those who are in a constant state of excitement, retards the cure and improvement which is so desirable.

This necessary separation of patients into classes, and isolating certain cases of insanity in its mild form from those who may be violent, is an object very desirable to accomplish. But this classification, however important, cannot be made to any very great extent until more accommodations are afforded. The additional building proposed by the trustees is an absolute necessity, if the State would receive such benefits from her generous efforts, as she has a right to expect.

The present crowded condition of the different wards, and the increase of those cases which offer a reasonable prospect of relief or cure from medical treatment, and the inability of the superintendent to fully carry out the suggestions here made, combine to convince us that another year should not pass without the erection and completion of the building now contemplated.

#### NIGHT CARE.

We have good reason to believe that the night watch are faithful in the discharge of their duties, and that the employing of a special watch was very proper, wise, and of great service to the patients.

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#### SICK ROOMS.

As our predecessors stated in their report of last year when speaking of the sick rooms, they "are quite insufficient in number and accommodations, and their location on the lower floor is decidedly unfavorable, depriving the patients of pure air, sunshine and light." We go farther. We utterly condemn these rooms as being absolutely unfit—on account of location—for persons in robust health; what then can they be for the sick? A sick room where no ray of sunlight ever enters, and upon the ground floor of a granite building, where no breeze can penetrate, we emphatically pronounce unfit for an animal. Our surprise is not that the sick sometimes die here, but we are surprised that any ever recover. Until the new building is completed we suggest that one of the private halls be devoted to the purposes of a sick room.

We submit for consideration that the old ladies now inmates of the hospital would be better off at home, that the Insane Hospital of this State is not, and should not be made an "Old Ladies' Home." If towns have such persons who are supported at the expense of the municipality, then they should be taken care of in a proper manner within their towns, and the room now occupied by them be used as a sick room. It does not affect our judgment in this matter to be informed that the towns find it cheaper to board these patients at the hospital and have the State pay about one-half the cost, but this economy on the part of towns may account for the large number sent into the different wards by towns, and the expense shared by the State.

#### HOOR OF RISING.

We believe during the winter the hour of rising should not be earlier than six o'clock in the morning, and the heat should not be kept much lower than during the day. To turn off the warmth, or to reduce it very much through the winter nights, we regard as a saving of fuel at the expense of comfort.

#### FEMALE PHYSICIAN.

From frequent conversation, inquiry and investigation, we are convinced that the employment of a female physician in the hospital has become indispensable. Upon the general subject of females practicing medicine and gynecology we need offer no remark, because their success and the cordial reception they have received in this country and Europe is a complete and final answer

to any objection that can now be raised. Not to admit that female physicians are an accepted fact, and such a fact as the public are thankful exists, is to deny what is undeniable.

Now it is a truth that all physicians of any considerable experience well know, many of the different forms of insanity depend for their primary cause and continuance upon some forms of uterine disease. In our hospital there are patients suffering from this cause, but how far this acts to prolong their insanity is not within our province to discuss. But from the fact of the existence of such diseases among the female patients, and from the fact that it has heretofore been found impossible to treat these cases for obvious reasons, we think it wise to adopt a new method. We are firmly of the opinion that a female physician would reach such cases, and more successfully than has hitherto been done, and could accomplish more than could a male physician, however capable he may be.

By the foregoing suggestings we wish to be understood as making a clear and wide distinction between female physicians and mere "doctoresses," or female quacks. We base our suggestions upon the assumption that as high degree of professional talent be demanded, as in the case of male physicians for like positions. It is no answer that the experiment has once been tried and failed, for the qualifications we contemplate are no lower than we would suggest in the employing of any physician—male as well as female. The time has been when any old and carefully nursed prejudice against female physicians should give way to existing necessity, and in view of the good results that will come from an intelligent examination of the subject, and a cordial adoption of the suggestions herein offered, we submit the matter to those who have any direct or indirect influence in the accomplishment of this reform, but as bearing upon the matter discussed, we beg leave to append the following well considered comments of the *Gospel Banner*. In remarking upon the medical education of women, the *Banner* says:

In our hospital for the insane in this city, we have 420 patients, about half of whom are females. As the responsibilities are now arranged, these two departments are entirely under the supervision and direction of two male physicians, one of whom has charge of the men and the other the women. Now very many of the latter are subjects of complaints peculiar to females. Indeed, in many cases, the insanity of these poor creatures is the direct result of those complaints. This fact, no man, at all con-

versant with the subject will dispute. Now, notwithstanding their insanity, they still retain all their native feelings and instincts of delicacy. Who will pretend that the presence of a man—however thoroughly educated—in the halls of these unfortunates, is so desirable as that of a thoroughly educated female physician with whom they could converse in confidence, and unfold the story of their troubles and the cause of all their affliction. Just reverse the picture for a moment. More than two hundred men and youths occupy the other wings of the institution. Now, will any man contend that it is as proper and beneficial for a woman physician, no matter how thorough may be her medical instruction, to have medical charge of these men, as for a man to have charge of them?

What a majority of the female patients need is not drugs so much as the kindness and sympathy, and patient, tender nursing of persons of their own sex. These characteristics are needed in all the attendants, but especially so in the woman physician who should have oversight of this department. To succeed, she should not only be thoroughly instructed in her profession as a medical practitioner, but she should be eminently humane, tender and faithful, traits which are indispensable to the kindness, sympathy and patient nursing of which we speak. We understand that female physicians are given positions in some of the hospitals of this country with eminent success, and that neither Dr. Harlow nor either of the other physicians connected with our hospital, objects to such an arrangement in connection with our hospital. Indeed, the experiment was tried ten years ago for a brief time in our State, but from lack of fitness, the lady did not succeed. But that is no argument against the trial of another, nor against the demands which really exist for such a trial. Of the large number of female physicians, who have fitted themselves for practice, let the woman be selected who will prove *the right* woman for the place, and if she does not succeed, try another.

Before closing our report, we will say that the labors of the committee have been increased by the resignation of the lady member of the committee, Mrs. G. W. Quinby of Augusta. Mrs. Quinby had been a member of the committee for five successive years, and during this time she has been faithful to the hospital, and unremitting in her efforts to discharge the duties imposed upon her. It had been her intention to decline further service at the close of last year, but at the earnest solicitation of the Governor and Council she consented to withdraw her resignation till her successor could be found; but owing to failing health and the demands of private duties she tendered her resignation in June, and it was reluctantly accepted.

Her associates upon the committee are under obligations for valuable information and suggestions in the effort to discharge the

duties of which they had little or no knowledge. To an earnest desire to promote the interests of the hospital, she brought a cultivated mind, a sympathy that sprung from a warm, Christian heart and an unswerving purpose to mitigate the suffering ones shut up in these granite walls. No day has been too stormy and no night too dark or gloomy to prevent her ministrations to her unfortunate wards. Her position involved an extensive correspondence and subjected her to such frequent demands upon her time, that it became too much for her strength. Too much praise cannot be accorded this lady for her untiring labors and the success that has resulted. Although not at the present time a member of the Board, many of the suggestions herein presented were made by her, to the whole of which, except what is personal to herself, she gives her entire sanction.

No candidate appearing to fill the vacancy caused by Mrs. Quinby's resignation, no appointment was made till November, when Mrs. C. R. Whidden of Calais was appointed. Though not being able, by reason of residing at a distance, to make frequent visits to the hospital, she will visit as often as once per month, remaining a week at each visit. From our brief acquaintance with the lady, we predict that her service will be characterized by the same qualities that have distinguished her predecessor.

In closing, we should be pleased to advert to other matters connected with the hospital, but they are not within the scope of this report and not germane to the subjects we are called upon to discuss. No statement of fact or suggestion is here made that has not been carefully considered, and we submit the report in the hope that the suggestions set forth may fix the attention of those who would intelligently and effectively minister to the class of unfortunates confined in the Insane Hospital.

F. G. PARKER.

JOHN B. FOSTER.