

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

1878.

VOLUME I.

AUGUSTA:

SPRAGUE, OWEN & NASH, PRINTERS TO THE STATE.

1878.

FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

VISITING COMMITTEE

OF THE

MAINE INSANE HOSPITAL.

1877.



AUGUSTA:

SPRAGUE, OWEN & NASH, PRINTERS TO THE STATE.

1877.

REPORT.

*To the Honorable the Governor
and the Executive Council:*

We have the honor to submit to you the Fourth Annual Report of the Committee of Visitors to the Insane Hospital, for the year ending December 1, 1877.

The Hospital has been visited as often as once in every month by at least two of the Visitors, and weekly visits—with a few exceptions—have been made by the resident Visitor. In making these visits it has been our purpose to ascertain, as best we could, if the patients were humanely treated and properly cared for. To do this, our visits have been made unheralded, and at hours varying from half past five in the morning to twelve at midnight, when we have freely conversed with all the inmates and listened attentively to those who desired to communicate with us. But few complaints of ill-treatment have been made, and these when investigated were found to be not well grounded. It is quite impossible for your Committee, in their occasional visits, to be cognizant of all that may transpire in a Hospital containing more than four hundred patients, all of whom are diseased in mind and many of them in body.

We have endeavored to acquaint ourselves with all new patients, and of all changes in the several wards which may have been made between our successive visits; also to carefully peruse all letters received from the patients, and give them such attention and consideration as their contents appeared to demand. We have received many letters from the friends of patients, requiring replies, in order to assure

them of kind and watchful care and to give them renewed confidence in the good management of the Hospital.

WARD AND DINING HALLS.

The ward halls and dining halls have been found in a uniformly neat and orderly condition, and the Attendants strive to keep them thus.

DORMITORIES.

The dormitories, although not all we could wish, are kept as neat and in as healthful condition as circumstances will permit, and the beds are comfortable and well supplied with suitable clothing.

CLOTHING.

As a general thing we find the patients are well clothed, but occasionally we find a few who—on account of their destructive tendencies—are quite destitute, sometimes exposing their persons. For this class we would suggest that they be provided with a more substantial material, and thereby save the necessity of confining their hands or placing them in the lodges.

FOOD.

In making these visits we have availed ourselves of the opportunity of being present in the dining halls when meals were served, and on all occasions we found the quantity of food ample and quality good and well served.

SUICIDES.

During the past year there have been two suicides and one accidental drowning at the Hospital. In both cases of suicide the resident Visitor was promptly notified by the Superintendent, and upon careful investigation it was learned that the officers and attendants were exonerated from blame and that a coroner's inquest was not necessary.

VENTILATION.

We are gratified that we are able to state, that during the year improvements have been made which tend largely to

increase the convenience and comfort of the patients. The ventilation of the halls, so long needed, is now completed; and one passing through the halls now must observe the healthful change in the atmosphere when compared with the condition of the halls before the change was made, and we congratulate the Trustees and resident officers, who had the work in charge, upon the success which has crowned their efforts, and the certain sanitary influence this improvement will have on the patients and those in attendance.

WATER-WORKS.

Great credit is also due for the untiring efforts of the Trustees and officers of the Hospital in completing the extensive water-works, which now gives an abundant supply of water to all parts of the Hospital, the value of which cannot be over-estimated.

LAUNDRY.

In the report of last year the Committee of Visitors invited attention to the Laundry and its work, believing it was not producing the desired results for such an institution. We now take pleasure in stating that the old Laundry has been thoroughly repaired and improved, so that in all of its appointments it is so arranged that, properly directed, it will add to the welfare of the patients by giving them a better quality of work, and that too with the same amount of labor.

NIGHT CARE.

The Committee of Visitors called attention last year to the great necessity, as they thought, of increased night care; and as no change has been made in the number of watchers, we feel it to be our duty to respectfully suggest that it will be well to add one man and one woman, believing that four persons is not any too large a force to watch over and look after the welfare of more than four hundred insane persons during the night, who are subject to the various changes which surely follow sleeplessness. Watchers and attendants should be

diligent observers of the patients during the night and day, and report their observations to the Superintendent or the attending physician, to the end that they may receive such medical treatment as will soonest restore them to health, or produce the best possible results.

INCREASE OF WAGES.

We think the attendants are striving to do their duty, and we are gratified to know that the Trustees have decided to increase the wages of all who remain a year and prove faithful. This will create some emulation among them to excel in well-doing, and cause them to remain at their post longer than heretofore.

CLASSIFICATION.

The same condition of things still exists as when the last report was made, in regard to classification of patients in the halls and at the tables. We would suggest that an improvement be sought in these respects as speedily as possible, so that the patients who are regarded as curable may not be in constant contact with the raving and demented patients who are not receiving curative treatment.

BATH ROOMS.

The bath rooms have been renovated and much improved the past year, but the recommendations in the last report of your Visitors are still applicable.

SICK ROOMS.

The sick rooms—four in number—and quite inadequate to the demands, where there are so many patients, have been almost constantly occupied and have afforded increased comfort, compared with former accommodations. It is to be hoped that arrangements will be made so that other rooms may be devoted to the same purpose.

AMUSEMENTS.

We are pleased that much attention is still given to the amusement of patients by entertainments of a varied character

in the Amusement Hall. We would be glad to see the patients furnished with as many of the games, best adapted to their condition, as would be practicable, that the sad and lonely ones may have the greatest amount of amusement and diversion.

EXERCISE IN OPEN AIR.

We observe very beneficial results to the patients arising from increased opportunities given them for exercise in the open air, by walking, riding and their daily visits to the Park. We trust these opportunities will be increased until all the patients who are able to leave the Hospital will be found in the open air on all suitable days.

MECHANICAL RESTRAINT.

Year by year we find a less degree of mechanical restraint used upon the patients, and we hope to know that there will be less in the future. We believe that when attendants will give their undivided attention to the wants and necessities of patients, there will be but little demand for mechanical restraint. To care for these unfortunate patients requires persons possessed of the best qualities of head and heart, and it is gratifying that most of the attendants possess these qualities. Attendants should never lose sight of the fact that their whole time and best endeavors belong to the patients, and they should allow nothing to divert them from duty.

HOOR FOR RISING.

Patients are now required to rise at half-past five in the morning, which we think is too early, and we would respectfully suggest that from October to April they be allowed to remain in bed another hour.

WARMING APPARATUS.

It gives us pleasure to know that the warming apparatus will be run through the night during the cold winter months, thereby keeping all the halls at a temperature that will ensure comfort to the inmates.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion we desire to state, that while the Maine Insane Hospital is not all it should be in all of its appointments, nor all it will be in time, we believe the Trustees and officers are warmly devoted to its best interests, and are doing all in their power to have it take the highest rank among the Hospitals of our land.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

CHARLES BUFFUM,	} <i>Committee of</i>
GEO. A. PREBLE,	
MRS. G. W. QUINBY,	

STATE OF MAINE.

IN COUNCIL, December 6, 1877.

Accepted, and five hundred copies ordered to be printed.

Attest:

S. J. CHADBOURNE,
Secretary of State.