

Although these regulations were not laid down until some time after the establishment of the County System, yet apparently there was no confusion of thought regarding their function. They were deliberately planned with the idea that they would answer the purpose of caring for certain helpless classes at a modest rate of maintenance. What has happened was inevitable, and Nova Scotia is simply passing through the experience of such states as Massachusetts, New York and others, where similar conditions existed until the public opinion demanded their reform in the interests of humanity.

In 1865 a report was submitted in reference to the Poor House and County system in New York State. It embodied the following statements,—“The facts elicited by this investigation are too appalling to be forgotten, and too important to be thrown aside. In order to make room for recent cases, and such as afford promise of relief or cure by treatment, and those who are constantly urging for admission, and humanity demands that they shall not be turned away, it becomes necessary for the State Asylum to return to the counties by which they have been supported at the asylum many chronic and incurable cases. In many instances the counties have little or no disposition to send such cases there, prompted by the idea that they can be supported at less expense in a county poor house. The state has grown immensely in population and in due ratio the number of its insane has increased, until its state asylum is filled to its utmost capacity, and the tide of its overflow has set back upon the county poor houses; and they too have become filled to an excess of human misery, degradation and wretchedness that wrings a cry of distress from the heart of every philanthropist.”

At the time this report was made some 1,400 insane outside of the counties of New York and King's were being treated as paupers, without medical care, and dependent largely upon their brother paupers for such attention as they received. The result of this movement was the establishment of the Willard Asylum. Quoting from the report on Institutional care of the Insane,—“At the time there was much adverse criticism of the principle which this act created, viz., separate institutions for the acute and chronic classes, but in reality that principle had been followed for years under the very worst conditions, when the chronic cases were returned from Utica to the county homes.”

“The movement on the county authorities which began in 1871 for exemption from sending the chronic class to the state institutions was gradually extending until, in 1887, nineteen counties had been legally authorized to maintain this class of dependents, the State Board of Charities having the power to grant such exemptions under promise from the counties “to give their insane just as good as the state gives.” The abuses under this arrangement were so great that an active campaign