

"I have yet to find a single keeper or matron of an asylum to which the mental defectives are sent to associate with the paupers, whose experience in looking after the two classes is sufficient to give the opinion any value, who does not think the mixing of the two kinds of inmates most undesirable. When it is done there is either a dangerous amount of liberty granted the defectives or they are isolated and secluded to an extent that means positive neglect, and leads to distinct deterioration and the formation of bad habits. It cannot be otherwise. The staff of an ordinary almshouse usually consists of a keeper and a matron. The former has charge of the farm and the latter of the house-keeping. When at his work the keeper must either take the insane men with him or leave them at home. The first is often impracticable, and the second unsafe unless the patient is locked up. This more or less frequent seclusion always has an evil effect in causing the insane person to fall into bad habits. Sometimes most objectionable and severe mechanical restraints are used, and nothing but harm results."

In the Province of New Brunswick it is much to be regretted that the Government, on account of the overcrowded condition of the provincial hospital, is contemplating a resort to the Nova Scotia system. At the last session of Parliament legislation was passed providing for the examination of all patients therein by a Commission composed of the medical superintendent and two other doctors. When the work of the Commission, which began its labours in November last, is completed, a report is to be made to the Government with a view to the selection of those who, being supposed to be harmless, can be sent back to their friends or to the county almshouses. To carry out such retrograde legislation will be to sully the record of a province which has heretofore always steadfastly declared against the incarceration of lunatics, even temporarily, in prisons or poorhouses—a province which can boast with pride of having been the first of the British North American colonies to provide special accommodation for its dependent insane.

At present, in New Brunswick, perhaps the gravest existing defect in connexion with the insane is the method, or rather lack of method, of commitment to the provincial hospital. The safeguarding of the liberty of the subject seems to be little heeded, and a patient can be conveyed to it with only a line from a doctor. No thought is given to advising the hospital authorities beforehand that a patient is coming, and often no history whatever of the case is furnished. The medical superintendent, however, informs me that this matter is to be remedied at once, and that the present year will see the manner of commitment more in consonance with the modes adopted in other civilized countries.